A Ladder of Swords

GILBERT PARKER

A
LADDER OF SWORDS

A TALE OF LOVE, LAUGHTER AND TEARS

BY

GILBERT PARKER

"On every height there lies repose; and so must we still be climbing; but alas! I have been climbing a ladder of swords these many years."

(From a woman's letter.)

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To

The Countess of Darnley

Whose Home Contains Many Relics and
Memories of the Spacious Times of
Queen Elizabeth, the Friend
of Michel and Angèle

A Note

There will be found a few anachronisms in this tale, but none so important as to give a wrong impression of the events of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

"Come hither, O come hither,
    There's a bride upon her bed;
They have strewn her o'er with roses,
    There are roses 'neath her head:
Life is love and tears and laughter,
    But the laughter it is dead—
Sing the way to the valley, to the valley!
    Hey, but the roses they are red!"

A Ladder of Swords

I

F you go to Southampton and search the register of the Walloon church there, you will find that in the summer of 157– "*Madame Vefue de Montgomery with all her family and servants were admitted to the Communion*"—"*Tous ceux cj furent Reçus là à Cêne du* 157–, *comme passans, sans avoir Rendu Raison de la foj, mes sur la tesmognage de Mons. Forest, Ministre de Madame, quj certifia quj ne cognoisoit Rien en tout ceux la por quoy Il ne leur deust administré la Cêne s'il estoit en lieu por la ferre.*"

There is another striking record, which says that in August of the same year De-

moiselle Angèle Claude Aubert, daughter of Monsieur de la Haie Aubert, Councillor of the Parliament of Rouen, was married to Michel de la Forêt, of the most noble Flemish family of that name.

When I first saw these records, now grown dim with time, I fell to wondering what was the real life-history of these two people. Forthwith, in imagination, I began to make their story piece by piece; and I had reached a romantic *dénoûment* satisfactory to myself and in sympathy with fact, when the Angel of Accident stepped forward with some "human documents." Then I found that my tale, woven back from the two obscure records I have given, was the true story of two most unhappy yet most happy people. From the note struck in my mind, when my finger touched that sorrowful page in the register of the Church of the Refugees at Southampton, had spread out the whole melody and the very book of the song.

One of the later-discovered records was a letter, tear-stained, faded, beautifully writ-

ten in old French, from Demoiselle Angèle Claude Aubert to Michel de la Forêt at Anvers in March of the year 157–. The letter lies beside me as I write, and I can scarcely believe that three and a quarter centuries have passed since it was written, and that she who wrote it was but eighteen years old at the time. I translate it into English, though it is impossible adequately to carry over either the flavor or the idiom of the language:

"*Written on this May Day of the year* 157–, *at the place hight Rozel in the Minor called of the same of Jersey Isle, to Michel de la Forêt, at Anvers in Flanders.*

"MICHEL,—Thy good letter by safe carriage cometh to my hand, bringing to my heart a lightness it hath not known since that day when I was hastily carried to the port of St. Malo, and thou towards the King his prison. In what great fear have I lived, having no news of thee and fearing all manner of mischance! But our God hath be-

nignly saved thee from death, and me He hath set safely here in this isle of the sea.

"Thou hast ever been a brave soldier, enduring and not fearing; thou shalt find enow to keep thy blood stirring in these days of trial and peril to us who are so opprobriously called Les Huguenots. If thou wouldst know more of my mind thereupon, come hither. Safety is here, and work for thee—smugglers and pirates do abound on these coasts, and Popish wolves do harry the flock even in this island province of England. Michel, I plead for the cause which thou hast nobly espoused, but—alas! my selfish heart, where thou art lie work and fighting, and the same high cause, and sadly, I confess, it is for my own happiness that I ask thee to come. I wot well that escape from France hath peril, that the way hither from that point upon yonder coast called Carteret is hazardous, but yet—but yet all ways to happiness are set with hazard.

"If thou dost come to Carteret thou wilt see two lights turning this-wards: one upon a headland called Tour de Rozel, and one

upon the great rock called of the Ecréhos. These will be in line with thy sight by the sands of Hatainville. Near by the Tour de Rozel shall I be watching and awaiting thee. By day and night doth my prayer ascend for thee.

"The messenger who bears this to thee (a piratical knave with a most kind heart, having, I am told, a wife in every port of France and of England the south, a most heinous sin!) will wait for thy answer, or will bring thee hither, which is still better. He is worthy of trust if thou makest him swear by the little finger of St. Peter. By all other swearings he doth deceive freely.

"The Lord make thee true, Michel. If thou art faithful to me, I shall know how faithful thou art in all; for thy vows to me were most frequent and pronounced, with a full savor that might warrant short seasoning. Yet, because thou mayst still be given to such dear fantasies of truth as were on thy lips in those dark days wherein thy sword saved my life 'twixt Paris and Rouen, I tell thee now that I do love thee, and shall

so love when, as my heart inspires me, the cloud shall fall that will hide us from each other forever.

"ANGÈLE

"*An Afterword:*

"I doubt not we shall come to the heights where there is peace, though we climb thereto by a ladder of swords. A."

Some years before Angèle's letter was written, Michel de la Forêt had become an officer in the army of Comte Gabriel de Montgomery, and fought with him until what time the great chief was besieged in the castle of Domfront in Normandy. When the siege grew desperate, Montgomery besought the intrepid young Huguenot soldier to escort Madame de Montgomery to England, to be safe from the oppression and misery sure to follow any mishap to this noble leader of the Camisards.

At the very moment of departure of the refugees from Domfront with the Comtesse, Angèle's messenger—the "piratical knave with a most kind heart"—presented him-

self, delivered her letter to De la Forêt, and proceeded with the party to the coast of Normandy by St. Brieuc. Embarking there in a lugger which Buonespoir the pirate secured for them, they made for England.

Having come but half-way of the Channel, the lugger was stopped by an English frigate. After much persuasion the captain of the frigate agreed to land Madame de Montgomery upon the island of Jersey, but forced De la Forêt to return to the coast of France; and Buonespoir elected to return with him.

II

EANWHILE Angèle had gone through many phases of alternate hope and despair. She knew that Montgomery the Camisard was dead, and a rumor, carried by refugees, reached her that De la Forêt had been with him to the end. To this was presently added the word that De la Forêt had been beheaded. But one day she learned that the Comtesse de Montgomery was sheltered by the governor, Sir Hugh Pawlett, her kinsman, at Mont Orgueil Castle. Thither she went in fear from her refuge at Rozel, and was admitted to the Comtesse. There she learned the joyful truth that De la Forêt had not been slain, and was in hiding on the coast of Normandy.

The long waiting was a sore trial, yet laughter was often upon her lips henceforth. The peasants, the farmers and fishermen of Jersey, at first—as they have ever been—little inclined towards strangers, learned at last to look for her in the fields and upon the shore, and laughed in response, they knew not why, to the quick smiling of her eyes. She even learned to speak their unmusical but friendly Norman-Jersey French. There were at least a half-dozen fishermen who, for her, would have gone at night straight to the Witches' Rock in St. Clement's Bay—and this was bravery unmatched.

It came to be known along the coast that "ma'm'selle" was waiting for a lover fleeing from the French coast. This gave her fresh interest in the eyes of the serfs and sailors and their women folk, who at first were not inclined towards the Huguenot maiden, partly because she was French, and partly because she was not a Catholic. But even these, when they saw that she never talked religiously, that she was fast learning to speak their own homely patois, and that in

the sickness of their children she was untiring in her kindness, forgave the austerity of the gloomy-browed old man her father, who spoke to them distantly, or never spoke at all; and her position was secure. Then, upon the other hand, the gentry of the manors, seeing the friendship grow between her and the Comtesse de Montgomery at Mont Orgueil Castle, made courteous advances towards her father, and towards herself through him.

She could scarce have counted the number of times she climbed the great hill like a fortress at the lift of the little Bay of Rozel, and from the Nez du Guet scanned the sea for a sail and the sky for fair weather. When her eyes were not thus busy, they were searching the lee of the hill-side round for yellow lilies, and the valley below for the campion, the daffodil, and the thousand pretty ferns growing in profusion there. Every night she looked out to see that her signal-fire was lit upon the Nez du Guet, and she never went to bed without taking one last look over the sea, in the restless, invet-

erate hope which at once sustained her and devoured her.

But the longest waiting must end. It came on the evening of the very day that the Seigneur of Rozel went to Angèle's father and bluntly told him he was ready to forego all Norman-Jersey prejudice against the French and the Huguenot religion, and take Angèle to wife without penny or estate.

In reply to the seigneur, Monsieur Aubert said that he was conscious of an honor, and referred monsieur to his daughter, who must answer for herself; but he must tell Monsieur of Rozel that monsieur's religion would, in his own sight, be a high bar to the union. To that the seigneur said that no religion that he had could be a bar to anything at all, and so long as the young lady could manage her household, drive a good bargain with the craftsmen and hucksters, and have the handsomest face and manners in the Channel Islands, he'd ask no more; and she might pray for him and his salvation without let or hindrance.

The seigneur found the young lady in a

little retreat among the rocks, called by the natives *La Chaîne*. Here she sat sewing upon some coarse linen for a poor fisherwoman's babe when the seigneur came near. She heard the scrunch of his heels upon the gravel, the clank of his sword upon the rocks, and looked up with a flush, her needle poised; for none should know of her presence in this place save her father. When she saw who was her visitor, she rose. After greeting and compliment, none too finely put, but more generous than fitted with Jersey parsimony, the gentleman of Rozel came at once to the point.

"My name is none too bad," said he—"Raoul Lemprière, of the Lemprières that have been here since Rollo ruled in Normandy. My estate is none worse than any in the whole islands; I have more horses and dogs than any gentleman of my acres; and I am more in favor at court than De Carteret of St. Ouen's. I am the Queen's butler, and I am the first that royal favor granted to set up three dove-cotes, one by St. Aubin's, one by St. Helier's, and one at Rozel; and—and,"

he added, with a lumbering attempt at humor—"and, on my oath, I'll set up another dove-cote without my sovereign's favor, with your leave alone. By Our Lady, I do love that color in yon cheek! Just such a color had my mother when she snatched from the head of my cousin of Carteret's milk-maid-wife the bonnet of a lady of quality and bade her get to her heifers. God's beauty! but 'tis a color of red primroses in thy cheeks and blue campions in thine eyes. Come, I warrant I can deepen that color"—he bowed low—"Madame of Rozel, if it be not too soon!"

The girl listened to this cheerful and loquacious proposal and courtship all in one, ending with the premature bestowal of a title, in mingled anger, amusement, disdain, and apprehension. Her heart fluttered, then stood still, then flew up in her throat, then grew terribly hot and hurt her, so that she pressed her hand to her bosom as though that might ease it. By the time he had finished, drawn himself up, and struck his foot upon the ground in burly emphasis of his devoted

statements, the girl had sufficiently recovered to answer him composedly, and with a little glint of demure humor in her eyes. She loved another man; she did not care so much as a spark for this happy, swearing, swashbuckling gentleman; yet she saw he had meant to do her honor. He had treated her as courteously as was in him to do; he chose her out from all the ladies of his acquaintance to make her an honest offer of his hand —he had said nothing about his heart; he would, should she marry him, throw her scraps of good-humor, bearish tenderness, drink to her health among his fellows, and respect and admire her—even exalt her almost to the rank of a man in his own eyes; and he had the tolerance of the open-hearted and open-handed man. All these things were as much a compliment to her as though she were not a despised Huguenot, an exiled lady of no fortune. She looked at him a moment with an almost solemn intensity, so that he shifted his ground uneasily, but at once smiled encouragingly, to relieve her embarrassment at the unexpected honor

done her. She had remained standing; now, as he made a step towards her, she sank down upon the seat and waved him back courteously.

"A moment, Monsieur of Rozel," she ventured. "Did my father send you to me?"

He inclined his head and smiled again.

"Did you say to him what you have said to me?" she asked, not quite without a touch of malice.

"I left out about the color in the cheek," he answered, with a smirk at what he took to be the quickness of his wit.

"You kept your paint-pot for me," she replied, softly.

"And the dove-cote, too," he rejoined, bowing finely, and almost carried off his feet by his own brilliance.

She became serious at once—so quickly that he was ill prepared for it, and could do little but stare and pluck at the tassel of his sword, embarrassed before this maiden, who changed as quickly as the currents change under the brow of the Couperon Cliff, behind which lay his manor-house of Rozel.

"I have visited at your manor, Monsieur of Rozel. I have seen the state in which you live, your retainers, your men-at-arms, your farming-folk, and your sailor-men. I know how your Queen receives you; how your honor is as stable as your fief."

He drew himself up again proudly. He could understand this speech.

"Your horses and your hounds I have seen," she added, "your men-servants and your maid-servants, your fields of corn, your orchards, and your larder. I have sometimes broken the commandment and coveted them and envied you."

"Break the commandment again for the last time," he cried, delighted and boisterous. "Let us not waste words, lady. Let's kiss and have it over."

Her eyes flashed. "I coveted them and envied you; but, then, I am but a vain girl at times, and vanity is easier to me than humbleness."

"Blood of man, but I cannot understand so various a creature!" he broke in, again puzzled.

"There is a little chapel in the dell beside your manor, monsieur. If you will go there, and get upon your knees, and pray till the candles no more burn and the Popish images crumble in their places, you will yet never understand myself or any woman."

"There's no question of Popish images between us," he answered, vainly trying for foothold. "Pray as you please, and I'll see no harm comes to the Mistress of Rozel."

He was out of his bearings and impatient. Religion to him was a dull recreation invented chiefly for women.

She became plain enough now. "'Tis no images nor religion that stands between us," she answered, "though they might well do so. It is that I do not love you, Monsieur of Rozel."

His face, which had slowly clouded, suddenly cleared.

"Love! Love!" He laughed good-humoredly. "Love comes, I'm told, with marriage. But we can do well enough without fugling on that pipe. Come, come, dost

think I'm not a proper man and a gentleman? Dost think I'll not use thee well and 'fend thee, Huguenot though thou art, 'gainst trouble or fret or any man's persecutions—be he my lord bishop, my lord chancellor, or King of France, or any other?"

She came a step closer to him, even as though she would lay a hand upon his arm. "I believe that you would do all that in you lay," she answered, steadily. "Yours is a rough wooing, but it is honest—"

"Rough! Rough!" he protested, for he thought he had behaved like some Adonis. Was it not ten years only since he had been at court?

"Be assured, monsieur, that I know how to prize the man who speaks after the light given him. I know that you are a brave and valorous gentleman. I must thank you most truly and heartily, but, monsieur, you and yours are not for me. Seek elsewhere, among your own people, in your own religion and language and position, the Mistress of Rozel."

He was dumfounded. Now he com-

prehended the plain fact that he had been declined.

"You send me packing!" he blurted out, getting red in the face.

"Ah, no! Say that is my misfortune that I cannot give myself the great honor," she said, in her tone a little disdainful dryness, a little pity, a little feeling that here was a good friend lost.

"It's not because of the French soldier that was with Montgomery at Domfront?—I've heard that story. But he's gone to heaven, and 'tis vain crying for last year's breath," he said, with proud philosophy.

"He is not dead. And if he were," she added, "do you think, monsieur, that we should find it easier to cross the gulf between us?"

"Tut! tut! that bugbear love!" he said, shortly. "And so you'd lose a good friend for a dead lover? I' faith, I'd befriend thee well if thou wert my wife, ma'm'selle."

"It is hard for those who need friends to lose them," she answered, sadly.

The sorrow of her position crept in upon

her and filled her eyes with tears. She turned them to the sea—instinctively towards that point on the shore where she thought it likely Michel might be—as though by looking she might find comfort and support in this hard hour.

Even as she gazed into the soft afternoon light she could see, far over, a little sail standing out towards the Ecréhos. Not once in six months might the coast of France be seen so clearly. One might almost have noted people walking on the beach. This was no good token, for when that coast may be seen with great distinctness a storm follows hard after. The girl knew this, and, though she could not know that this was Michel de la Forêt's boat, the possibility fixed itself in her mind. She quickly scanned the horizon. Yes, there in the northwest was gathering a dark-blue haze, hanging like small, filmy curtains in the sky.

The Seigneur of Rozel presently broke the silence so awkward for him. He had seen the tears in her eyes, and, though he could not guess the cause, he vaguely thought it

might be due to his announcement that she had lost a friend. He was magnanimous at once, and he meant what he said, and would stand by it through thick and thin.

"Well, well, I'll be thy everlasting friend if not thy husband," he said, with ornate generosity. "Cheer thy heart, lady."

With a sudden impulse she seized his hand and kissed it, and, turning, ran swiftly down the rocks towards her home.

He stood and looked after her, then, dumfounded, at the hand she had kissed.

"Blood of my heart!" he said, and shook his head in utter amazement.

Then he turned and looked out upon the Channel. He saw the little boat Angèle had descried making from France. Glancing at the sky, "What fools come there!" he said, anxiously.

They were Michel de la Forêt and Buonespoir the pirate, in a black-bellied cutter with red sails.

III

FOR weeks De la Forêt and Bounespoir had lain in hiding at St. Brieuc. At last Buonespoir declared all was ready once again. He had secured for the Camisard the passport and clothes of a priest who had but just died at Granville. Once again they made the attempt to reach English soil.

Standing out from Carteret on the *Belle Suzanne*, they steered for the light upon the Marmotier Rocks of the Ecréhos, which Angèle had paid a fisherman to keep going every night. This light had caused the French and English frigates some uneasiness, and they had patrolled the Channel from Cap de la Hague to the Bay of St. Brieuc with a vigilance worthy of a larger cause. One fine day an English frigate anchored off the

Ecréhos, and the fisherman was seized. He, poor man, swore that he kept the light burning to guide his brother fishermen to and fro between Boulay Bay and the Ecréhos. The captain of the frigate tried severities; but the fisherman stuck to his tale, and the light burned on as before—a lantern stuck upon a pole. One day, with a telescope, Buonespoir had seen the exact position of the staff supporting the light and had mapped out his course accordingly. He would head straight for the beacon and pass between the Marmotier and the Maître Île, where is a narrow channel for a boat drawing only a few feet of water. Unless he made this he must run south and skirt the Écrivière Rock and bank, where the streams setting over the sandy ridges make a confusing, perilous sea to mariners in bad weather. Or he must sail north between the Ecréhos and the Dirouilles, in the channel called Étoc, a tortuous and dangerous passage save in good weather, and then safe only to the mariner who knows the floor of that strait like his own hand. De la Forêt was wholly in the hands of

Buonespoir, for he knew nothing of these waters and coasts; also he was a soldier and no sailor.

They cleared Cape Carteret with a fair wind from the northeast, which should carry them safely as the bird flies to the haven of Rozel. The high, pinkish sands of Hatainville were behind them; the treacherous Taillepied rocks lay to the north, and a sweet sea before. Nothing could have seemed fairer and more hopeful. But a few old fishermen on shore at Carteret shook their heads dubiously, and at Port Bail, some miles below, a disabled naval officer, watching through a glass, rasped out, "Criminals or fools!" But he shrugged his shoulders, for if they were criminals he was sure they would expiate their crimes this night, and if they were fools—he had no pity for fools.

But Buonespoir knew his danger. Truth is, he had chosen this night because they would be safest from pursuit, because no sensible seafaring man, were he king's officer or another, would venture forth upon the impish Channel save to court disaster.

Pirate and soldier in priest's garb had frankly taken the chances.

With a fair wind they might, with all canvas set—mainsail, foresail, jib, and foretopsail—make Rozel Bay within two hours and a quarter. All seemed well for a brief half-hour. Then, even as the passage between the Marmotier and the Ecréhos opened out, the wind suddenly shifted from the northeast to the southwest and a squall came hurrying on them—a few moments too soon; for, had they been clear of the Ecréhos, clear of the Taillepieds, Felée Bank, and the Écrivière, they could have stood out towards the north in a more open sea.

Yet there was one thing in their favor: the tide was now running hard from the northwest, so fighting for them while the wind was against them. Their only safety lay in getting beyond the Ecréhos. If they attempted to run in to the Marmotier for safety, they would presently be at the mercy of the French. To trust their doubtful fortunes and bear on was the only way. The tide was running fast. They gave the mainsail

to the wind still more, and bore on towards the passage. At last, as they were opening on it, the wind suddenly veered full north-east. The sails flapped, the boat seemed to hover for a moment, and then a wave swept her towards the rocks. Buonespoir put the helm hard over, she went about, and they close-hauled her as she trembled towards the rocky opening.

This was the critical instant. A heavy sea was running, the gale was blowing hard from the northeast, and under the close-hauled sail the *Belle Suzanne* was lying over dangerously. But the tide, too, was running hard from the south, fighting the wind, and at the moment when all seemed terribly uncertain swept them past the opening and into the swift-running channel, where the indraught sucked them through to the more open water beyond.

Although the *Belle Suzanne* was in more open water now, the danger was not over. Ahead lay a treacherous sea, around them roaring winds, and the perilous coast of Jersey beyond all.

"Do you think we shall land?" quietly asked De la Forêt, nodding towards the Jersey coast.

"As many chances 'gainst it as for it, m'sieu'," said Buonespoir, turning his face to the north, for the wind had veered again to northeast, and he feared its passing to the northwest, giving them a head-wind and a swooping sea.

Night came down, but with a clear sky and a bright moon, the wind, however, not abating. The next three hours were spent in tacking, in beating towards the Jersey coast under seas which almost swamped them. They were standing off about a mile from the island, and could see lighted fires and groups of people upon the shore, when suddenly a gale came out from the southwest, the wind having again shifted. With an oath Buonespoir put the helm hard over, the *Belle Suzanne* came about quickly, but as the gale struck her the mast snapped like a pencil, she heeled over, and the two adventurers were engulfed in the waves.

A cry of dismay went up from the watchers on the shore. They turned with a half-conscious sympathy towards Angèle, for her story was known by all, and in her face they read her mortal fear, though she made no cry, but only clasped her hands in agony. Her heart told her that yonder Michel de la Forêt was fighting for his life. For an instant only she stood, the terror of death in her eyes, then she turned to the excited fishermen near.

"Men, oh men!" she cried, "will you not save them? Will no one come with me?"

Some shook their heads sullenly, others appeared uncertain, but their wives and children clung to them, and none stirred. Looking round helplessly, Angèle saw the tall figure of the Seigneur of Rozel. He had been watching the scene for some time. Now he came quickly to her.

"Is it the very man?" he asked her, jerking a finger towards the struggling figures in the sea.

"Yes, oh yes," she replied, nodding her head, piteously. "God tells my heart it is."

Her father drew near and interposed.

"Let us kneel and pray for two dying men," said he, and straightway knelt upon the sand.

"By St. Martin, we've better medicine than that, apothecary!" said Lemprière of Rozel, loudly, and, turning round, summoned two serving-men. "Launch my strong boat," he added. "We will pick these gentlemen from the brine or know the end of it all."

The men hurried gloomily to the long boat, ran her down to the shore and into the surf.

"You are going — you are going to save him, dear seigneur?" asked the girl, tremulously.

"To save him—that's to be seen, mistress," answered Lemprière, and advanced to the fishermen. By dint of hard words and as hearty encouragement and promises, he got a half-dozen strong sailors to man the boat.

A moment after, they were all in. At a motion from the seigneur the boat was shot out into the surf, and a cheer from the shore gave heart to De la Forêt and Buonespoir, who were being driven upon the rocks.

The Jerseymen rowed gallantly, and the seigneur, to give them heart, promised a shilling, a capon, and a gallon of beer to each if the rescue was made. Again and again the two men seemed to sink beneath the sea, and again and again they came to the surface and battled further, torn, battered, and bloody, but not beaten. Cries of, "We're coming, gentles, we're coming!" from the Seigneur of Rozel came ringing through the surf to the dulled ears of the drowning men, and they struggled on.

There never was a more gallant rescue. Almost at their last gasp the two were rescued.

"Mistress Aubert sends you welcome, sir, if you be Michel de la Forêt," said Lemprière of Rozel, and offered the fugitive his horn of liquor as he lay blown and beaten in the boat.

"I am he," De la Forêt answered. "I owe you my life, monsieur," he added.

Lemprière laughed. "You owe it to the lady; and I doubt you can properly pay the debt," he answered, with a toss of the head;

for had not the lady refused him, the Seigneur of Rozel, six feet six in height, and all else in proportion, while this gentleman was scarce six feet.

"We can have no quarrel upon the point," answered De la Forêt, reaching out his hand; "you have at least done tough work for her, and if I cannot pay in gold I can in kind. It was a generous deed, and it has made a friend forever of Michel de la Forêt."

"Raoul Lemprière of Rozel they call me, Michel de la Forêt, and, by Rollo the Duke, but I'll take your word in the way of friendship, as the lady yonder takes it for riper fruit! Though, faith, 'tis fruit of a short summer, to my thinking."

All this while Buonespoir the pirate, his face covered with blood, had been swearing by the little finger of St. Peter that each Jerseyman there should have the half of a keg of rum. He went so far in gratitude as to offer the price of ten sheep which he had once secretly raided from the Seigneur of Rozel and sold in France, for which he had been seized on his later return to

the island and had escaped without punishment.

Hearing, Lemprière of Rozel roared at him in anger: "Durst speak to me! For every fleece you thieved I'll have you flayed with bowstrings if ever I sight your face within my boundaries."

"Then I'll fetch and carry no more for M'sieu' of Rozel," said Buonespoir, in an offended tone, but grinning under his reddish beard.

"When didst fetch and carry for me, varlet?" Lemprière roared again.

"When the Seigneur of Rozel fell from his horse, overslung with sack, the night of the royal duke's visit, and the footpads were on him, I carried him on my back to the lodge of Rozel Manor. The footpads had scores to settle with the great Rozel."

For a moment the seigneur stared, then roared again, but this time with laughter.

"By the devil and Rollo, I have sworn to this hour that there was no man in the isle could have carried me on his shoulders. And I was right, for Jersiais you're none, neither

by adoption nor grace, but a citizen of the sea."

He laughed again as a wave swept over them, drenching them, and a sudden squall of wind came out of the north. "There's no better head in the isle than mine for measurement and thinking, and I swore no man under eighteen stone could carry me, and I am twenty-five—I take you to be nineteen stone, eh?"

"Nineteen, less two ounces," grinned Buonespoir.

"I'll laugh De Carteret of St. Ouen's out of his stockings over this," answered Lemprière. "Trust me for knowing weights and measures! Look you, varlet, thy sins be forgiven thee. I care not about the fleeces, if there be no more stealing. St. Ouen's has no head—I said no one man in Jersey could have done it—I'm heavier by three stone than any man in the island."

Thereafter there was little speaking among them, for the danger was greater as they neared the shore. The wind and the sea were against them; the tide, however, was in their

favor. Others besides M. Aubert offered up prayers for the safe landing of the rescued and rescuers. Presently an ancient fisherman broke out into a rude sailor's chantey, and every voice, even those of the two Huguenots, took it up:

"When the Four Winds, the Wrestlers, strive with the Sun,
When the Sun is slain in the dark;
When the stars burn out, and the night cries
To the blind sea-reapers, and they rise,
And the water-ways are stark—
God save us when the reapers reap!
When the ships sweep in with the tide to the shore,
And the little white boats return no more;
When the reapers reap,
Lord give Thy sailors sleep,
If Thou cast us not upon the shore,
To bless Thee evermore:
To walk in Thy sight as heretofore
Though the way of the Lord be steep!
By Thy grace,
Show Thy face,
Lord of the land and the deep!"

The song stilled at last. It died away in the roar of the surf, in the happy cries of foolish women and the laughter of men back

from a dangerous adventure. As the seigneur's boat was drawn up the shore Angèle threw herself into the arms of Michel de la Forêt, the soldier dressed as a priest.

Lemprière of Rozel stood abashed before this rich display of feeling. In his hottest youth he could not have made such passionate motions of affection. His feelings ran neither high nor broad, but neither did they run low and muddy. His nature was a straight level of sensibility—a rough stream between high banks of prejudice, topped with the foam of vanity, now brawling in season, and now going steady and strong to the sea. Angèle had come to feel what he was beneath the surface. She felt how unimaginative he was, and how his humor, which was but the horse-play of vanity, helped him little to understand the world or himself. His vanity was ridiculous, his self-importance was against knowledge or wisdom; and Heaven had given him a small brain, a big and noble heart, a pedigree back to Rollo, and the absurd pride of a little lord in a little land. Angèle knew all this, but

realized also that he had offered her all he was able to offer to any woman.

She went now and put out both hands to him. "I shall ever pray God's blessing on the Lord of Rozel," she said, in a low voice.

"'Twould fit me no better than St. Ouen's sword fits his fingers. I'll take thine own benison, lady—but on my cheek, not on my hand as this day before at four of the clock." His big voice lowered. "Come, come, the hand thou kissed, it hath been the hand of a friend to thee, as Raoul Lemprière of Rozel said he'd be. Thy lips upon his cheek, though it be but a rough fellow's fancy, and I warrant, come good, come ill, Rozel's face will never be turned from thee. Pooh, pooh! let yon soldier-priest shut his eyes a minute; this is 'tween me and thee; and what's done before the world's without shame."

He stopped short, his black eyes blazing with honest mirth and kindness, his breath short, having spoken in such haste.

Her eyes could scarce see him, so full of tears were they, and, standing on tiptoe, she kissed him upon each cheek.

"'Tis much to get for so little given," she said, with a quiver in her voice; "yet this price for friendship would be too high to pay to any save the Seigneur of Rozel."

She hastily turned to the men who had rescued Michel and Buonespoir. "If I had riches, riches ye should have, brave men of Jersey," she said, "but I have naught save love and thanks, and my prayers, too, if ye will have them."

"'Tis a man's duty to save his fellow an' he can," cried a gaunt fisherman, whose daughter was holding to his lips a bowl of conger-eel soup.

"'Twas a good deed to send us forth to save a priest of Holy Church," cried a weazened boat-builder with a giant's arm, as he buried his face in a cup of sack and plunged his hand into a fishwife's basket of limpets.

"Ay, but what means she by kissing and arm-getting with a priest?" cried a snarling vraic-gatherer. "'Tis some jest upon Holy Church, or yon priest is no better than common men, but an idle shame."

By this time Michel was among them.

"Priest I am none, but a soldier," he said, in a loud voice, and told them bluntly the reasons for his disguise; then, taking a purse from his pocket, thrust into the hands of his rescuers and their families pieces of silver and gave them brave words of thanks.

But the seigneur was not to be outdone in generosity. His vanity ran high; he was fain to show Angèle what a gorgeous gentleman she had failed to make her own; and he was in ripe good-humor all round.

"Come, ye shall come, all of ye, to the Manor of Rozel, every man and woman here. Ye shall be fed, and fuddled too ye shall be an' ye will; for honest drink which sends to honest sleep hurts no man. To my kitchen with ye all; and you, messieurs"—turning to M. Aubert and De la Forêt—"and you, mademoiselle, come, know how open is the door and full the table at my Manor of Rozel —St. Ouen's keeps a beggarly board."

IV

HUS began the friendship of the bragging Seigneur of Rozel for the three Huguenots, all because he had seen tears in a girl's eyes and misunderstood them, and because the same girl had kissed him. His pride was flattered that they should receive protection from him, and the flattery became almost a canonizing when De Carteret of St. Ouen's brought him to task for harboring and comforting the despised Huguenots; for when De Carteret railed he was envious. So henceforth Lemprière played lord protector with still more boisterous unction. His pride knew no bounds when, three days after the rescue, Sir Hugh Pawlett, the governor, answering De la Forêt's letter requesting permission to visit

the Comtesse de Montgomery, sent him word to fetch De la Forêt to Mont Orgueil Castle. Clanking and blowing, he was shown into the great hall with De la Forêt, where waited Sir Hugh and the widow of the renowned Camisard. Clanking and purring like an enormous cat, he turned his head away to the window when De la Forêt dropped on his knees and kissed the hand of the comtesse, whose eyes were full of tears. Clanking and gurgling, he sat at a mighty meal of turbot, eels, lobsters, ormers, capons, boar's head, brawn and mustard, swan, curlew, and spiced meats. This he washed down with bastard, malmsey, and good ale, topped with almonds, comfits, perfumed cherries with "ipocras," then sprinkled himself with rose-water and dabbled his face and hands in it. Filled to the turret, he lurched to his feet, and, drinking to Sir Hugh's toast, "Her sacred Majesty!" he clanked and roared "Elizabeth!" as though upon the field of battle. He felt the star of De Carteret declining and Rozel's glory ascending like a comet. Once set in a course, nothing could

change him. Other men might err, but, once right, the Seigneur of Rozel was everlasting.

Of late he had made the cause of Michel de la Forêt and Angèle Aubert his own. For this he had been raked upon the coals by De Carteret of St. Ouen's and his following, who taunted him with the saying, "Save a thief from hanging and he'll cut your throat." Not that there was ill feeling against De la Forêt in person. He had won most hearts by a frank yet still manner, and his story and love for Angèle had touched the women folk where their hearts were softest. But the island was not true to itself or its history if it did not divide itself into factions, headed by the seigneurs, and there had been no ground for good division for five years till De la Forêt came.

Short of actual battle, this new strife was the keenest ever known, for Sir Hugh Pawlett was ranged on the side of the Seigneur of Rozel. Kinsman of the Comtesse de Montgomery, of Queen Elizabeth's own Protestant religion, and admiring De la Forêt, he had given every countenance to the Cami-

sard refugee. He had even besought the royal court of Jersey to grant a pardon to Buonespoir the pirate, on condition that he should never commit a depredation upon an inhabitant of the island—this he was to swear to by the little finger of St. Peter. Should he break his word he was to be banished the island for ten years, under penalty of death if he returned. When the hour had come for Buonespoir to take the oath he failed to appear, and the next morning the Seigneur of St. Ouen's discovered that during the night his cellar had been raided of two kegs of canary, many flagons of muscadella, pots of anchovies and boxes of candied "eringo," kept solely for the visit which the Queen had promised the island. There was no doubt of the misdemeanant, for Buonespoir returned to De Carteret from St. Brieuc the gabardine of one of his retainers, in which he had carried off the stolen delicacies.

This aggravated the feud between the partisans of St. Ouen's and Rozel, for Lemprière of Rozel had laughed loudly when he heard of the robbery, and said: "'Tis like

St. Ouen's to hoard for a queen and glut a pirate. We feed as we get at Rozel, and will feed the court well, too, when it comes, or I'm no butler to Elizabeth!"

But trouble was at hand for Michel and for his protector. The spies of Catherine de Medici, mother of the King of France, were everywhere. These had sent word that De la Forêt was now attached to the meagre suite of the widow of the great Camisard Montgomery, near the Castle of Mont Orgueil. The Medici, having treacherously slain the chief, became mad with desire to slay the lieutenant. She was set to have the man, either through diplomacy with England, or to end him by assassination through her spies. Having determined upon his death, with relentless soul she pursued the cause as closely as though this exiled soldier were a powerful enemy at the head of an army in France.

Thus it was that she wrote to Queen Elizabeth, asking that "this arrant foe of France, this churl, conspirator, and reviler of the sacraments, be rendered unto our hands for

well-deserved punishment as warning to all such evil-doers." She told Elizabeth of De la Forêt's arrival in Jersey, disguised as a priest of the Church of France, and set forth his doings since landing with the Seigneur of Rozel. Further she went on to say to "our sister of England" that "these dark figures of murder and revolt be a peril to the soft peace of this good realm."

To this Elizabeth, who had no knowledge of Michel, who desired peace with France at this time, who had favors to ask of Catherine, and who in her own realm had fresh reason to fear conspiracy through the Queen of the Scots and others, replied forthwith that, "If this De la Forêt falleth into our hands, and if it were found he had in truth conspired against France its throne, had he a million lives, not one should remain." Having despatched this letter, she straightway sent a messenger to Sir Hugh Pawlett in Jersey, making quest of De la Forêt, and commanding that he should be sent to her in England at once.

When the Queen's messenger arrived at

Orgueil Castle, Lemprière chanced to be with Sir Hugh Pawlett, and the contents of Elizabeth's letter were made known to him.

At the moment Monsieur of Rozel was munching macaroons and washing them down with canary. The governor's announcement was such a shock that he choked and coughed, the crumbs flying in all directions, and another pint of canary must be taken to flush his throat. Thus cleared for action, he struck out.

"'Tis St. Ouen's work," he growled.

"'Tis the work of the Medici," said Sir Hugh. "Read," he added, holding out the paper.

Now Lemprière of Rozel had a poor eye for reading. He had wit enough to wind about the difficulty.

"If I see not the Queen's commands, I've no warrant but Sir Hugh Pawlett's words, and I'll to London and ask 'fore her Majesty's face if she wrote them, and why. I'll tell my tale and speak my mind, I pledge you, sir."

"You'll offend her Majesty. Her commands are here." Pawlett tapped the letter with his finger.

"I'm butler to the Queen, and she will list to me. I'll not smirk and caper like St. Ouen's; I'll bear me like a man not speaking for himself. I'll speak as Harry her father spoke—straight to the purpose. . . . No, no, no, I'm not to be wheedled, even by a Pawlett, and you shall not ask me. If you want Michel de la Forêt, come and take him. He is in my house. But ye must *take* him, for *come* he shall not!"

"You will not oppose the Queen's officers?"

"De la Forêt is under my roof. He must be taken. I will give him up to no one; and I'll tell my sovereign these things when I see her in her palace."

"I misdoubt you'll play the bear," said Pawlett, with a dry smile.

"The Queen's tongue is none so tame. I'll travel by my star, get sweet or sour."

"Well, well, 'give a man luck, and throw him into the sea,' is the old proverb. I'm coming for your friend to-night."

"I'll be waiting with my fingers on the door, sir," said Rozel, with a grim vanity and an outrageous pride in himself.

V

THE Seigneur of Rozel found De la Forêt at the house of M. Aubert. His face was flushed with hard riding, and perhaps the loving attitude of Michel and Angèle deepened it, for at the garden gate the lovers were saying adieu.

"You have come for Monsieur de la Forêt?" asked Angèle, anxiously. Her quick look at the seigneur's face had told her there were things amiss.

"There's commands from the Queen. They're for the ears of De la Forêt," said the seigneur.

"I will hear them, too," said Angèle, her color going, her bearing determined.

The seigneur looked down at her with boyish appreciation, then said to De la Forêt:

"Two queens make claim for you. The wolfish Catherine writes to England for her lost Camisard, with much fool's talk about 'dark figures,' and 'conspirators,' 'churls,' and foes of 'soft peace,' and England takes the bait and sends to Sir Hugh Pawlett yonder. And, in brief, monsieur, the governor is to have you under arrest and send you to England. God knows why two queens make such a pother over a fellow with naught but a sword and a lass to love him—though, come to think, 'a man's a man if he have but a hose on his head,' as the proverb runs."

De la Forêt smiled, then looked grave as he caught sight of Angèle's face. "'Tis arrest, then?" he asked.

"'Tis come willy-nilly," answered the seigneur. "And once they've forced you from my doors, I'm for England to speak my mind to the Queen. I can make interest for her presence—I hold court office!" he added, with puffing confidence.

Angèle looked up at him with quick tears, yet with a smile on her lips.

"You are going to England for Michel's sake?" she said, in a low voice.

"For Michel, or for you, or for mine honor, —what matter, so that I go?" he answered, then added, "There must be haste to Rozel, friend, lest the governor take Lemprière's guest like a potato-digger in the fields."

Putting spurs to his horse, he cantered heavily away, not forgetting to wave a pompous farewell to Angèle.

De la Forêt was smiling as he turned to Angèle. She looked wonderingly at him, for she had felt that she must comfort him, and she looked not for this sudden change in his manner.

"Is prison-going so blithe, then?" she asked, with a little uneasy laugh which was half a sob.

"It will bring things to a head," he answered. "After danger and busy days, to be merely safe, it is scarce the life for Michel de la Forêt. I have my duty to the comtesse; I have my love for you; but I seem of little use by contrast with my past. And yet, and yet," he added, half sadly, "how

futile has been all our fighting, so far as human eye can see!"

"Nothing is futile that is right, Michel," the girl replied. "Thou hast done as thy soul answered to God's messages: thou hast fought when thou couldst, and thou hast sheathed thy blade when there was naught else to do. Are not both right?"

He clasped her to his breast, then, holding her from him a little, looked into her eyes steadily a moment.

"God hath given thee a true heart, and the true heart hath wisdom," he answered.

"You will not seek escape? Nor resist the governor?" she asked, eagerly.

"Whither should I go? My place is here by you, by the Comtesse de Montgomery. One day it may be I shall return to France and to our cause—"

"If it be God's will."

"If it be God's will."

"Whatever comes, you will love me, Michel?"

"I will love you whatever comes."

"Listen." She drew his head down. "I

am no drag-weight to thy life? Thou wouldst not do otherwise if there were no foolish Angèle?"

He did not hesitate. "What is best is. I might do otherwise if there were no Angèle in my life to pilot my heart, but that were worse for me."

"Thou art the best lover in all the world."

"I hope to make a better husband. To-morrow is carmine-lettered in my calendar, if thou sayest thou wilt still have me under the sword of the Medici."

Her hand pressed her heart suddenly. "Under the sword, if it be God's will," she answered. Then, with a faint smile, "But no, I will not believe the Queen of England will send thee, one of her own Protestant faith, to the Medici."

"And thou wilt marry me?"

"When the Queen of England approves thee," she answered, and buried her face in the hollow of his arm.

An hour later Sir Hugh Pawlett came to the manor-house of Rozel with twoscore

men-at-arms. The seigneur himself answered the governor's knocking, and showed himself in the doorway with a dozen halberdiers behind him.

"I have come seeking Michel de la Forêt," said the governor.

"He is my guest."

"I have the Queen's command to take him."

"He is my cherished guest."

"Must I force my way?"

"Is it the Queen's will that blood be shed?"

"The Queen's commands must be obeyed."

"The Queen is a miracle of the world, God save her! What is the charge against him?"

"Summon Michel de la Forêt, 'gainst whom it lies."

"He is my guest; ye shall have him only by force."

The governor turned to his men. "Force the passage and search the house," he commanded.

The company advanced with levelled pikes, but at a motion from the seigneur his men fell back before them, and, making a lane,

disclosed Michel de la Forêt at the end of it. Michel had not approved of Lemprière's mummery of defence, but he understood from what good spirit it sprang, and how it flattered the seigneur's vanity to make show of resistance.

The governor greeted De la Forêt with a sour smile, read to him the Queen's writ, and politely begged his company towards Mont Orgueil Castle.

"I'll fetch other commands from her Majesty, or write me down a peddler of St. Ouen's follies," the seigneur said from his doorway, as the governor and De la Forêt bade him good-bye and took the road to the castle.

VI

MICHEL DE LA FORÊT was gone, a prisoner. From the dusk of the trees by the little chapel of Rozel, Angèle had watched his exit in charge of the governor's men. She had not sought to show her presence; she had seen him—that was comfort to her heart; and she would not mar the memory of that last night's farewell by another before these strangers. She saw with what quiet Michel bore his arrest, and she said to herself, as the last halberdier vanished:

"If the Queen do but speak with him, if she but look upon his face and hear his voice, she must needs deal kindly by him. My Michel—ah, it is a face for all men to trust and all women—"

But she sighed and averted her head as though before prying eyes.

The bell of Rozel chapel broke gently on the evening air; the sound, softened by the leaves and mellowed by the wood of the great elm-trees, billowed away till it was lost in faint reverberation in the sea beneath the cliffs of the Couperon, where a little craft was coming to anchor in the dead water.

At first the sound of the bell soothed her, softening the thought of the danger to Michel. She moved with it towards the sea, the tones of her grief chiming with it. Presently, as she went, a priest in cassock and robes and stole crossed the path in front of her, an acolyte before him swinging a censer, his voice chanting Latin verses from the service for the sick, in his hands the sacred elements of the communion for the dying. The priest was fat and heavy, his voice was lazy, his eyes expressionless, and his robes were dirty. The plaintive, peaceful sense which the sound of the vesper-bell had thrown over Angèle's sad reflections passed away, and the thought smote her that, were it not for such as this

black-toothed priest, Michel would not now be on his way to England, a prisoner. To her this vesper-bell was the symbol of tyranny and hate. It was fighting, it was martyrdom, it was exile, it was the Medici. All that she had borne, all that her father had borne, the thought of the home lost, the mother dead before her time, the name ruined, the heritage dispossessed, the red war of the Camisards, the rivulets of blood in the streets of Paris and of her loved Rouen, smote upon her mind and drove her to her knees in the forest glade, her hands upon her ears to shut out the sound of the bell. It came upon her that the bell had said "Peace! Peace!" to her mind when there should be no peace; that it had said "Be patient!" when she should be up and doing; that it had whispered "Stay!" when she should tread the path her lover trod, her feet following in his footsteps as his feet had trod in hers.

She pressed her hands tight upon her ears and prayed with a passion and a fervor she had never known before. A revelation seem-

ed to come upon her, and, for the first time, she was a Huguenot to the core. Hitherto she had suffered for her religion because it was her mother's broken life, her father's faith, and because they had suffered and her lover had suffered. Her mind had been convinced, her loyalty had been unwavering, her words for the great cause had measured well with her deeds. But new senses were suddenly born in her, new eyes were given to her mind, new powers for endurance to her soul. She saw now as the martyrs of Meaux had seen; a passionate faith descended on her as it had descended on them; no longer only patient, she was fain for action. Tears rained from her eyes. Her heart burst itself in entreaty and confession.

"Thy light shall be my light, and Thy will my will, O Lord," she cried at the last. "Teach me Thy way, create a right spirit within me. Give me boldness without rashness, and hope without vain thinking. Bear up my arms, O Lord, and save me when falling. A poor Samaritan am I. Give me the water that shall be a well of water springing

up to everlasting life, that I thirst not in the fever of doing. Give me the manna of life to eat that I faint not nor cry out in plague, pestilence, or famine. Give me Thy grace, O God, as Thou has given it to Michel de la Forêt, and guide my feet as I follow him in life and in death, for Christ's sake. Amen."

As she rose from her knees she heard the evening gun from the Castle of Mont Orgueil, whither Michel was being borne by the Queen's men. The vesper-bell had stopped. Through the wood came the salt savor of the sea on the cool sunset air. She threw back her head and walked swiftly towards it, her heart beating hard, her eyes shining with the light of purpose, her step elastic with the vigor of youth and health. A quarter-hour's walking brought her to the cliff of the Couperon.

As she gazed out over the sea, however, a voice in the bay below caught her ear. She looked down. On the deck of the little craft which had entered the harbor when the vesper-bell was ringing stood a man who waved a hand up towards her, then gave a peculiar

call. She stared with amazement: it was Buonespoir the pirate. What did this mean? Had God sent this man to her, by his presence to suggest what she should do in this crisis in her life? For even as she ran down the shore towards him, it came to her mind that Buonespoir should take her in his craft to England.

What to do in England? Who could tell? She only knew that a voice called her to England to follow the footsteps of Michel de la Forêt, who even this night would be setting forth in the governor's brigantine for London.

Buonespoir met her upon the shore, grinning like a boy.

"God save you, lady!" he said.

"What brings you hither, friend?" she asked.

If he had said that a voice had called him hither as one called her to England, it had not sounded strange; for she was not thinking that this was one who superstitiously swore by the little finger of St. Peter, but only that he was the man who had brought

her Michel from France, who had been a faithful friend to her and to her father.

"What brings me hither?" Buonespoir laughed low in his chest. "Even to fetch to the Seigneur of Rozel, a friend of mine by every token of remembrance, a dozen flagons of golden muscadella."

To Angèle no suggestion flashed that these flagons of muscadella had come from the cellar of the Seigneur of St. Ouen's, where they had been reserved for a certain royal visit. Nothing was in her mind save the one thought—that she must follow Michel.

"Will you take me to England?" she asked, putting a hand quickly on his arm.

He had been laughing hard, picturing to himself what Lemprière of Rozel would say when he sniffed the flagon of St. Ouen's best wine, and for an instant he did not take in the question; but he stared at her now as the laugh slowly subsided through notes of abstraction, and her words worked their way into his brain.

"Will you take me, Buonespoir?" she urged.

"Take you—?" he questioned.

"To England."

"And myself to Tyburn?"

"Nay, to the Queen."

"'Tis the same thing. Head of Abel! Elizabeth hath heard of me. The Seigneur of St. Ouen's and others have writ me down a pirate to her. She would not pardon the muscadella," he added, with another laugh, looking down where the flagons lay.

"She must pardon more than that," exclaimed Angèle, and hastily she told him of what had happened to Michel de la Forêt and why she would go.

"Thy father, then?" he asked, scowling hard in his attempt to think it out.

"He must go with me—I will seek him now."

"It must be at once, i' faith, for how long, think you, can I stay here unharmed? I was sighted off St. Ouen's shore a few hours agone."

"To-night?" she asked.

"By twelve, when we shall have the moon and the tide," he answered. "But hold!"

he hastily added. "What, think you, could you and your father do alone in England? And with me it were worse than alone. These be dark times, when strangers have spies at their heels and all travellers be suspect."

"We will trust in God," she answered.

"Have you money?" he questioned—"for London, not for me," he added, hastily.

"Enough," she replied.

"The trust with the money is a weighty matter," he added; "but they suffice not. You must have 'fending."

"There is no one," she answered, sadly, "no one save—"

"Save the Seigneur of Rozel!" Buonespoir finished the sentence. "Good. You to your father and I to the seigneur. If you can fetch your father by your pot-of-honey tongue, I'll fetch the great Lemprière with muscadella. Is't a bargain?"

"In which I gain all," she answered, and again touched his arm with her finger-tips.

"You shall be aboard here at ten, and I will join you on the stroke of twelve," he said, and gave a low whistle.

At the signal three men sprang up like magic out of the bowels of the boat beneath them, and scurried over the side; three as ripe knaves as ever cheated stocks and gallows, but simple knaves, unlike their master. Two of them had served with Francis Drake in that good ship of his lying even now not far from Elizabeth's palace at Greenwich. The third was a rogue who had been banished from Jersey for an habitual drunkenness which only attacked him on land—at sea he was sacredly sober. His name was Jean Nicolle. The names of the other two were Hervé Robin and Rouge le Riche, but their master called them by other names.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," said Buonespoir, in ceremony, and waved a hand of homage between them and Angèle. "Kiss dirt, and know where duty lies. The lady's word on my ship is law till we anchor at the Queen's Stairs at Greenwich. So, Heaven help you, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!" said Buonespoir.

A wave of humor passed over Angèle's grave face, for a stranger quartet never

sailed high seas together: one blind of an eye, one game of a leg, one bald as a bottle and bereft of two front teeth; but Buonespoir was sound of wind and limb, his small face with the big eyes lost in the masses of his red hair, and a body like Hercules. It flashed through Angèle's mind even as she answered the gurgling salutations of the triumvirate that they had been got together for no gentle summer sailing in the Channel. Her conscience smote her that she should use such churls; but she gave it comfort by the thought that while serving her they could do naught worse; and her cause was good. Yet they presented so bizarre an aspect, their ugliness was so varied and particular, that she almost laughed. Buonespoir understood her thoughts, for with a look of mocking innocence in his great blue eyes he waved a hand again towards the graceless trio, and said, "For deep-sea fishing," then solemnly winked at the three.

A moment later Angèle was speeding along the shore towards her home on the farther

hill-side up the little glen; and within an hour Buonespoir rolled from the dusk of the trees by the manor-house of Rozel and knocked at the door. He carried on his head, as a fishwife carries a tray of ormers, a basket full of flagons of muscadella; and he did not lower the basket when he was shown into the room where the Seigneur of Rozel was sitting before a trencher of spiced veal and a great pot of ale. Lemprière roared a hearty greeting to the pirate, for he was in a sour humor because of the taking-off of Michel de la Forêt; and of all men this pirate-fellow, who had quips and cranks, and had played tricks on his cousin of St. Ouen's, was most welcome.

"What's that on your teacup of a head?" he roared again, as Buonespoir grinned pleasure at the greeting.

"Muscadella," said Buonespoir, and lowered the basket to the table.

Lemprière seized a flagon, drew it forth, looked closely at it, then burst into laughter, and spluttered, "St. Ouen's muscadella, by the hand of Rufus!"

Seizing Buonespoir by the shoulders, he forced him down upon a bench at the table, and pushed the trencher of spiced meat against his chest. "Eat, my noble lord of the sea and master of the cellar!" he gurgled out, and, tipping the flagon of muscadella, took a long draught. "God-a-mercy—but it has saved my life," he gasped in satisfaction as he lay back in his great chair and put his feet on the bench whereon Buonespoir sat.

They raised their flagons and toasted each other, and Lemprière burst forth into song, in the refrain of which Buonespoir joined boisterously:

"King Rufus he did hunt the deer,
With a hey ho, come and kiss me, Dolly!
It was the spring-time of the year,
Hey ho, Dolly shut her eyes!
King Rufus was a bully boy,
He hunted all the day for joy,
Sweet Dolly she was ever coy:
And who would e'er be wise
That looked in Dolly's eyes?

"King Rufus he did have his day,
With a hey ho, come and kiss me, Dolly!

So get ye forth where dun deer play—
  Hey ho, Dolly comes again!
The greenwood is the place for me,
For that is where the dun deer be,
'Tis where my Dolly comes to me:
  And who would stay at home,
  That might with Dolly roam?
Sing hey ho, come and kiss me, Dolly!"

Lemprière, perspiring with the exertion, mopped his forehead, then lapsed into a plaintive mood.

"I've had naught but trouble of late," he wheezed. "Trouble! trouble! trouble! like gnats on a filly's flank!" and in spluttering words, twice bracketed in muscadella, he told of Michel de la Forêt's arrest, and of his purpose to go to England if he could get a boat to take him.

"'Tis that same business brings me here," said Buonespoir, and forthwith told of his meeting with Angèle and what was then agreed upon.

"You to go to England!" cried Lemprière, amazed. "They want you for Tyburn there."

"They want me for the gallows here,"

said Buonespoir. Rolling a piece of spiced meat in his hand, he stuffed it into his mouth and chewed till the grease came out of his eyes, and took eagerly from a servant a flagon of malmsey and a dish of ormers.

"Hush! chew thy tongue a minute," said the seigneur, suddenly starting and laying a finger beside his nose. "Hush!" he said, again, and looked into the flicker of the candle by him with half-shut eyes.

"May I have no rushes for a bed, and die like a rat in a moat, if I don't get thy pardon, too, of the Queen, and bring thee back to Jersey, a thorn in the side of De Carteret forever! He'll look upon thee assoilzied by the Queen, spitting fire in his rage, and no canary or muscadella in his cellar."

It came not to the mind of either that this expedition would be made at cost to themselves. They had not heard of Don Quixote, and their gifts were not imitative. They were of a day when men held their lives as lightly as many men hold their honor now, when championship was as the breath of life to men's nostrils, and to adventure for

what was worth having or doing in life the only road of reputation.

Buonespoir was as much a champion in his ways as Lemprière of Rozel. They were of like kidney, though so far apart in rank. Had Lemprière been born as low and as poor as Buonespoir, he would have been a pirate, too, no doubt; and had Buonespoir been born as high as the seigneur, he would have carried himself with the same rough sense of honor, with as ripe a vanity, have been as naïve, as sincere, as true to the real heart of man untaught in the dissimulation of modesty or reserve. When they shook hands across the trencher of spiced veal, it was as man shakes hand with man, not man with master.

They were about to start upon their journey when there came a knocking at the door. On its being opened the bald and toothless Abednego stumbled in with the word that immediately after Angèle and her father came aboard the *Honeyflower* some fifty halberdiers suddenly appeared upon the Couperon. They had at once set sail, and got

away even before the sailors had reached the shore. As they had rounded the point, where they were hid from view, Abednego dropped overboard and swam ashore on the rising tide, making his way to the manor to warn Buonespoir. On his way hither, stealing through the trees, he had passed a half-score of halberdiers making for the manor, and he had seen others going towards the shore.

Buonespoir looked to the priming of his pistols, and, buckling his belt tightly about him, turned to the seigneur and said: "I will take my chances with Abednego. Where does she lie—the *Honeyflower*, Abednego?"

"Off the point called Verclut," answered the little man, who had travelled with Francis Drake.

"Good; we will make a run for it, flying dot-and-carry-one as we go."

While they had been speaking the seigneur had been thinking; and now, even as several figures appeared at a little distance in the trees, making towards the manor, he said, with a loud laugh:

"No. 'Tis the way of a fool to put his head between the door and the jamb. 'Tis but a hundred yards to safety. Follow me —to the sea—Abednego last. This way, bullies!"

Without a word all three left the house and walked on in the order indicated, as De Carteret's halberdiers ran forward threatening.

"Stand!" shouted the sergeant of the halberdiers. "Stand, or we fire!"

But the three walked straight on unheeding. When the sergeant of the men-at-arms recognized the seigneur he ordered down the blunderbusses.

"We come for Buonespoir the pirate," said the sergeant.

"Whose warrant?" said the seigneur, fronting the halberdiers, Buonespoir and Abednego behind him.

"The Seigneur of St. Ouen's," was the reply.

"My compliments to the Seigneur of St. Ouen's, and tell him that Buonespoir is my guest," he bellowed, and strode on, the hal-

berdiers following. Suddenly the seigneur swerved towards the chapel and quickened his footsteps, the others but a step behind. The sergeant of the halberdiers was in a quandary. He longed to shoot, but dared not, and while he was making up his mind what to do the seigneur had reached the chapel door. Opening it, he quickly pushed Buonespoir and Abednego inside, whispering to them, then slammed the door and put his back against it.

There was another moment's hesitation on the sergeant's part, then a door at the other end of the chapel was heard to open and shut, and the seigneur laughed loudly. The halberdiers ran round the chapel. There stood Buonespoir and Abednego in a narrow roadway, motionless and unconcerned. The halberdiers rushed forward.

"Perquage! Perquage! Perquage!" shouted Buonespoir, and the bright moonlight showed him grinning.

For an instant there was deadly stillness, in which the approaching footsteps of the seigneur sounded loud.

"Perquage!" Buonespoir repeated.

"Perquage! Fall back!" said the seigneur, and waved off the pikes of the halberdiers. "He has sanctuary to the sea."

This narrow road in which the pirates stood was the last of three in the Isle of Jersey, running from churches to the sea, in which a criminal was safe from arrest by virtue of an old statute. The other *perquages* had been taken away, but this one of Rozel remained, a concession made by Henry VIII. to the father of this Raoul Lemprière. The privilege had been used but once in the present seigneur's day, because the criminal must be put upon the road from the chapel by the seigneur himself, and he had used his privilege modestly.

No man in Jersey but knew the sacredness of this *perquage*, though it was ten years since it had been used; and no man, not even the governor himself, dare lift his hand to one upon that road.

So it was that Buonespoir and Abednego, two fugitives from justice, walked quietly to the sea down the *perquage*, halberdiers,

balked of their prey, prowling on their steps and cursing the Seigneur of Rozel for his gift of sanctuary—for the Seigneur of St. Ouen's and the royal court had promised each halberdier three shillings and all the ale he could drink at a sitting if Buonespoir was brought in alive or dead.

In peace and safety the three boarded the *Honeyflower* off the point called Verclut, and set sail for England, just seven hours after Michel de la Forêt had gone his way upon the Channel, a prisoner.

VII

FORTNIGHT later, of a Sunday morning, the Lord Chamberlain of England was disturbed out of his usual equanimity. As he was treading the rushes in the presence-chamber of the royal palace at Greenwich, his eye busy in inspection—for the Queen would soon pass on her way to chapel—his head nodding right and left to archbishop, bishop, councillors of state, courtiers, and officers of the crown, he heard a rude noise at the door leading into the ante-chapel, where the Queen received petitions from the people. Hurrying thither in shocked anxiety, he found a curled gentleman of the guard, resplendent in red velvet and gold chains, in peevish argument with a boisterous seigneur of a bronzed, good-humored face,

who urged his entrance to the presence-chamber.

The Lord Chamberlain swept down upon the pair like a flamingo with wings outspread. "God's death! what means this turmoil? Her Majesty comes hither!" he cried, and scowled upon the intruder, who now stepped back a little, treading on the toes of a huge sailor with a small head and bushy red hair and beard.

"Because her Majesty comes I come also," the seigneur interposed, grandly.

"What is your name and quality?"

"Yours first, and I shall know how to answer."

"I am the Lord Chamberlain of England."

"And I, my lord, am Lemprière, Seigneur of Rozel—and butler to the Queen."

"Where is Rozel?" asked my Lord Chamberlain.

The face of the seigneur suddenly flushed, his mouth swelled, and then burst.

"*Where is Rozel!*" he cried, in a voice of rage. "Where is Rozel! Have you heard of Hugh Pawlett?" he asked, with a huge

contempt—"of Governor Hugh Pawlett?" The Lord Chamberlain nodded. "Then ask his Excellency when next you see him, Where is Rozel? But take good counsel and keep your ignorance from the Queen," he added. "She has no love for stupids."

"You say you are butler to the Queen? Whence came your commission?" said the Lord Chamberlain, smiling now; for Lemprière's words and ways were of some simple world where odd folk lived, and his boyish vanity disarmed anger.

"By royal warrant and heritage. And of all of the Jersey Isle, I only may have dovecotes, which is the everlasting thorn in the side of De Carteret of St. Ouen's. Now will you let me in, my lord?" he said, all in a breath.

At a stir behind him the Lord Chamberlain turned, and with a horrified exclamation hurried away, for the procession from the Queen's apartments had already entered the presence-chamber: gentlemen, barons, earls, knights of the garter, in brave attire, with bare heads and sumptuous calves. The Lord

Chamberlain had scarce got to his place when the Chancellor, bearing the seals in a red silk purse, entered, flanked by two gorgeous folk with the royal sceptre and the sword of state in a red scabbard, all flourished with fleurs-de-lis. Moving in and out among them all was the Queen's fool, who jested and shook his bells under the noses of the highest.

It was an event of which the Seigneur of Rozel told to his dying day: that he entered the presence-chamber of the royal palace of Greenwich at the same instant as the Queen —"Rozel at one end, Elizabeth at the other, and all the world at gaze," he was wont to say, with loud guffaws. But what he spoke of afterwards with preposterous ease and pride was neither pride nor ease at the moment; for the Queen's eyes fell on him as he shoved past the gentlemen who kept the door. For an instant she stood still, regarding him intently, then turned quickly to the Lord Chamberlain in inquiry, and with a sharp reproof, too, in her look. The Lord Chamberlain fell on his knee, and with low, uncertain voice explained the incident.

Elizabeth again cast her eyes towards Lemprière, and the court, following her example, scrutinized the seigneur in varied styles of insolence or curiosity. Lemprière drew himself up with a slashing attempt at composure, but ended by flaming from head to foot, his face shining like a cock's comb, the perspiration standing out like beads upon his forehead, his eyes gone blind with confusion. That was but for a moment, however, and then, Elizabeth's look being slowly withdrawn from him, a curious smile came to her lips, and she said to the Lord Chamberlain, "Let the gentleman remain."

The Queen's fool tripped forward and tapped the Lord Chamberlain on the shoulder. "Let the gentleman remain, gossip, and see you that remaining he goeth not like a fly with his feet in the porridge." With a flippant step before the seigneur, he shook his bells at him. "Thou shalt stay, Nuncio, and, staying, speak the truth. So doing, you shall be as noted as a comet with three tails. You shall prove that man was made in God's image. So lift thy head and sneeze—sneez-

ing is the fashion here; but see that thou sneeze not thy head off as they do in Tartary. 'Tis worth remembrance."

Rozel's self-importance and pride had returned. The blood came back to his heart, and he threw out his chest grandly; he even turned to Buonespoir, whose great figure might be seen beyond the door, and winked at him. For a moment he had time to note the doings of the Queen and her courtiers with wide-eyed curiosity. He saw the Earl of Leicester, exquisite, haughty, gallant, fall upon his knee, and Elizabeth slowly pull off her glove and with a none too gracious look give him her hand to kiss, the only favor of the kind granted that day. He saw Cecil, her minister, introduce a foreign noble, who presented his letters. He heard the Queen speak in a half-dozen different languages, to people of various lands, and was smitten with due amazement.

But as Elizabeth came slowly down the hall, her white silk gown fronted with great pearls flashing back the light, a marchioness bearing the train, the crown on her head glit-

tering as she turned from right to left, her wonderful collar of jewels sparkling on her uncovered bosom, suddenly the mantle of black, silver-shotted silk upon her shoulders became to Lemprière's heated senses a judge's robe, and Elizabeth the august judge of the world. His eyes blinded again, for it was as if she were bearing down upon him. Certainly she was looking at him now, scarce heeding the courtiers who fell to their knees on either side as she came on. The red doublets of the fifty Gentlemen Pensioners —all men of noble families proud to do this humble yet distinguished service—with battle-axes, on either side of her, seemed to Lemprière on the instant like an army with banners threatening him. From the antechapel behind him came the cry of the faithful subjects who, as the gentlemen-at-arms fell back from the doorway, had but just caught a glimpse of her Majesty—"Long live Elizabeth!"

It seemed to Lemprière that the Gentlemen Pensioners must beat him down as they passed, yet he stood riveted to the spot.

And, indeed, it was true that he was almost in the path of her Majesty. He was aware that two gentlemen touched him on the shoulder and bade him retire; but the Queen motioned to them to desist. So, with the eyes of the whole court on him again, and Elizabeth's calm, curious gaze fixed, as it were, on his forehead, he stood still till the flaming Gentlemen Pensioners were within a few feet of him and the battle-axes were almost over his head.

The great braggart was no better now than a wisp of grass in the wind, and it was more than homage that bent him to his knees as the Queen looked him full in the eyes. There was a moment's absolute silence, and then she said, with cold condescension:

"By what privilege do you seek our presence?"

"I am Raoul Lemprière, Seigneur of Rozel, your high Majesty," said the choking voice of the Jerseyman.

The Queen raised her eyebrows. "The man seems French. You come from France?"

Lemprière flushed to his hair—the Queen

did not know him, then! "From Jersey Isle, your sacred Majesty."

"Jersey Isle is dear to us. And what is your warrant here?"

"I am butler to your Majesty, by your gracious Majesty's patent, and I alone may have dove-cotes in the isle; and I only may have the perquage—on your Majesty's patent. It is not even held by De Carteret of St. Ouen's."

The Queen smiled as she had not smiled since she entered the presence-chamber. "God preserve us," she said, "that I should not have recognized you! It is, of course, our faithful Lemprière of Rozel."

The blood came back to the seigneur's heart, but he did not dare look up yet, and he did not see that Elizabeth was in rare mirth at his words; and though she had no ken or memory of him, she read his nature and was mindful to humor him. Beckoning Leicester to her side, she said a few words in an undertone, to which he replied with a smile more sour than sweet.

"Rise, Monsieur of Rozel," she said.

The seigneur stood up, and met her gaze faintly.

"And so, proud seigneur, you must needs flout e'en our Lord Chamberlain, in the name of our butler with three dove-cotes and the perquage. In sooth thy office must not be set at naught lightly—not when it is flanked by the perquage. By my father's doublet, but that frieze jerkin is well cut; it suits thy figure well—I would that my Lord Leicester here had such a tailor. But this perquage—I doubt not there are those here at court who are most ignorant of its force and moment. My Lord Chamberlain, my Lord Leicester, Cecil here—confusion sits in their faces. The perquage, which my father's patent approved, has served us well, I doubt not, is a comfort to our realm and a dignity befitting the wearer of that frieze jerkin. Speak to their better understanding, Monsieur of Rozel."

"Speak, Nuncio, and you shall have comforts, and be given in marriage, multiple or singular, even as I," said the fool, and touched him on the breast with his bells.

Lemprière had recovered his heart, and

now was set full sail in the course he had charted for himself in Jersey. In large words and larger manner he explained most innocently the sacred privilege of *perquage*.

"And how often have you used the right, friend?" asked Elizabeth.

"But once in ten years, your noble Majesty."

"When last?"

"But yesterday a week, your universal Majesty."

Elizabeth raised her eyebrows. "Who was the criminal, what the occasion?"

"The criminal was one Buonespoir, the occasion our coming hither to wait upon the Queen of England and our Lady of Normandy, for such is your well-born Majesty to your loyal Jersiais." And thereupon he plunged into an impeachment of De Carteret of St. Ouen's, and stumbled through a blunt, broken story of the wrongs and the sorrows of Michel and Angèle and the doings of Buonespoir in their behalf.

Elizabeth frowned and interrupted him. "I have heard of this Buonespoir, monsieur,

through others than the Seigneur of St. Ouen's. He is an unlikely squire of dames. There's a hill in my kingdom has long bided his coming. Where waits the rascal now?"

"In the antechapel, your Majesty."

"By the rood!" said Elizabeth, in sudden amazement. "In my antechapel, forsooth!"

She looked beyond the doorway and saw the great, red-topped figure of Buonespoir, his good-natured, fearless face, his shock of hair, his clear blue eye—he was not thirty feet away.

"He comes to crave pardon for his rank offences, your benignant Majesty," said Lemprière.

The humor of the thing rushed upon the Queen. Never before were two such naïve folk at court. There was not a hair of duplicity in the heads of the two, and she judged them well in her mind.

"I will see you stand together—you and your henchman," she said to Rozel, and moved on to the antechapel, the court following. Standing still just inside the doorway, she motioned Buonespoir to come near.

The pirate, unconfused, undismayed, with his wide, blue, asking eyes, came forward and dropped upon his knees. Elizabeth motioned Lemprière to stand a little apart.

Thereupon she set a few questions to Buonespoir, whose replies, truthfully given, showed that he had no real estimate of his crimes, and was indifferent to what might be their penalties. He had no moral sense on the one hand, on the other, no fear.

Suddenly she turned to Lemprière again. "You came, then, to speak for this Michel de la Forêt, the exile—?"

"And for the demoiselle Angèle Aubert, who loves him, your Majesty."

"I sent for this gentleman exile a fortnight ago—" She turned towards Leicester inquiringly.

"I have the papers here, your Majesty," said Leicester, and gave a packet over.

"And where have you De la Forêt?" said Elizabeth.

"In durance, your Majesty."

"When came he hither?"

"Three days gone," answered Leicester, a

little gloomily, for there was acerbity in Elizabeth's voice.

Elizabeth seemed about to speak, then dropped her eyes upon the papers and glanced hastily at their contents.

"You will have this Michel de la Forêt brought to my presence as fast as horse can bring him, my lord," she said to Leicester. "This rascal of the sea—Buonespoir—you will have safe bestowed till I recall his existence again," she said to a captain of men-at-arms; "and you, Monsieur of Rozel, since you are my butler, will get you to my dining-room and do your duty—the office is not all perquisites," she added, smoothly. She was about to move on when a thought seemed to strike her, and she added, "This mademoiselle and her father whom you brought hither—where are they?"

"They are even within the palace grounds, your imperial Majesty," answered Lemprière.

"You will summon them when I bid you," she said to the seigneur; "and you shall see that they have comforts and housing as be-

fits their station," she added to the Lord Chamberlain.

So did Elizabeth, out of a whimsical humor, set the highest in the land to attend upon unknown, unconsidered exiles.

VIII

IVE minutes later Lemprière of Rozel, as butler to the Queen, saw a sight of which he told to his dying day. When, after varied troubles hereafter set down, he went back to Jersey, he made a speech before the royal court, in which he told what chanced while Elizabeth was at chapel.

"There stood I, butler to the Queen," he said, with a large gesture, "but what knew I of butler's duties at Greenwich Palace! Her Majesty had given me an office where all the work was done for me. Odd's life! but when I saw the Gentleman of the Rod and his fellow get down on their knees to lay the cloth upon the table, as though it was an altar at Jerusalem, I thought it time

to say my prayers. There was naught but kneeling and retiring. Now it was the salt-cellar, the plate, and the bread; then it was a Duke's Daughter — a noble soul as ever lived—with a tasting-knife, as beautiful as a rose; then another lady enters who glares at me, and gets to her knees as does the other. Three times up and down, and then one rubs the plate with bread and salt, as solemn as St. Ouen's when he says prayers in the royal court. Gentles, that was a day for Jersey. For there stood I as master of all, the Queen's butler, and the greatest ladies of the land doing my will—though it was all Persian mystery to me, save when the kettle-drums began to beat and the trumpet to blow, and in walked bareheaded the yeomen of the guard, all scarlet, with a golden rose on their backs, bringing in a course of twenty-four gold dishes, and I, as Queen's butler, receiving them.

"Then it was I opened my mouth, amazed at the endless dishes filled with niceties of earth, and the Duke's Daughter pops onto my tongue a mouthful of the first dish

brought, and then does the same to every yeoman of the guard that carried a dish—that her notorious Majesty be safe against the hand of poisoners. There was I, fed by a Duke's Daughter; and thus was Jersey honored; and the Duke's Daughter whispers to me, as a dozen other unmarried ladies enter, 'The Queen liked not the cut of your frieze jerkin better than do I, seigneur.' With that she joins the others, and they all kneel down and rise up again, and, lifting the meat from the table, bear it into the Queen's private chamber.

"When they return, and the yeomen of the guard go forth, I am left alone with these ladies, and there I stand with twelve pairs of eyes upon me, little knowing what to do. There was laughter in the faces of some, and looks less taking in the eyes of others; for my Lord Leicester was to have done the duty I was set to do that day, and he the greatest gallant of the kingdom, as all the world knows. What they said among themselves I know not, but I heard Leicester's name, and I guessed that they were mostly

in the pay of his soft words. But the Duke's Daughter was on my side, as was proved betimes when Leicester made trouble for us who went from Jersey to plead the cause of injured folk. Of the earl's enmity to me—a foolish spite of a great nobleman against a Norman-Jersey gentleman—and of how it injured others for the moment, you all know; but we had him by the heels before the end of it, great earl and favorite as he was."

In the same speech Lemprière told of his audience with the Queen, even as she sat at dinner, and of what she said to him; but since his words give but a partial picture of events, the relation must not be his.

When the Queen returned from chapel to her apartments, Lemprière was called by an attendant, and he stood behind the Queen's chair until she summoned him to face her. Then, having finished her meal and dipped her fingers in a bowl of rose-water, she took up the papers Leicester had given her—the Duke's Daughter had read them aloud as she ate—and said:

"Now, my good Seigneur of Rozel, answer

me these few questions: First, what concern is it of yours whether this Michel de la Forêt be sent back to France or die here in England?"

"I helped to save his life at sea—one good turn deserves another, your high-born Majesty."

The Queen looked sharply at him, then burst out laughing.

"God's life, but here's a bull making epigrams!" she said. Then her humor changed. "See you, my butler of Rozel, you shall speak the truth, or I'll have you where that jerkin will fit you not so well a month hence. Plain answers I will have to plain questions, or De Carteret of St. Ouen's shall have his will of you and your precious pirate. So bear yourself as you would save your head and your honors."

Lemprière of Rozel never had a better moment than when he met the Queen of England's threats with faultless intrepidity. "I am concerned about my head, but more about my honors, and most about my honor," he replied. "My head is my own, my

honors are my family's, for which I would give my head when needed, and my honor defends both until both are naught—and all are in the service of my Queen."

Smiling, Elizabeth suddenly leaned forward, and, with a glance of satisfaction towards the Duke's Daughter, who was present, said:

"I had not thought to find so much logic behind your rampant skull," she said. "You've spoken well, Rozel, and you shall speak by the book to the end, if you will save your friends. What concern is it of yours whether Michel de la Forêt live or die?"

"It is a concern of one whom I've sworn to befriend, and that is my concern, your ineffable Majesty."

"Who the friend?"

"Mademoiselle Aubert."

"The betrothed of this Michel de la Forêt?"

"Even so, your exalted Majesty. But I made sure De la Forêt was dead when I asked her to be my wife."

"Lord! Lord! Lord! hear this vast infant, this hulking baby of a seigneur, this

primeval innocence! Listen to him, cousin," said the Queen, turning again to the Duke's Daughter. "Was ever the like of it in any kingdom of this earth? He chooses a penniless exile—he, a butler to the Queen, with three dove-cotes and the perquage—and a Huguenot withal. He is refused; then comes the absent lover oversea, to shipwreck; and our seigneur rescues him, 'fends him; and when yon master exile is in peril, defies his Queen's commands"—she tapped the papers lying beside her on the table—"then comes to England with the lady to plead the case before his outraged sovereign, with an outlawed buccaneer for comrade and lieutenant. There is the case, is't not?"

"I swore to be her friend," answered Lemprière, stubbornly, "and I have done according to my word."

"There's not another nobleman in my kingdom who would not have thought twice about the matter, with the lady aboard his ship on the high seas—'tis a miraculous chivalry, cousin," she added to the Duke's Daughter, who bowed, settled herself again

on her velvet cushion, and looked out of the corner of her eyes at Lemprière.

"You opposed Sir Hugh Pawlett's officers who went to arrest this De la Forêt," continued Elizabeth. "Call you that serving your Queen? Pawlett had our commands."

"I opposed them but in form, that the matter might the more surely be brought to your Majesty's knowledge."

"It might easily have brought you to the Tower, man."

"I had faith that your Majesty would do right in this, as in all else. So I came hither to tell the whole story to your judicial Majesty."

"Our thanks for your certificate of character," said the Queen, with amused irony. "What is your wish? Make your words few and plain."

"I desire before all that Michel de la Forêt shall not be returned to the Medici, most radiant Majesty."

"That's plain. But there are weighty matters 'twixt France and England, and De

la Forêt may turn the scale one way or another. What follows, beggar of Rozel?"

"That Mademoiselle Aubert and her father may live without let or hindrance in Jersey."

"That you may eat sour grapes ad eternam? Next?"

"That Buonespoir be pardoned all offences and let live in Jersey on pledge that he sin no more, not even to raid St. Ouen's cellars of the muscadella reserved for your generous Majesty."

There was such humor in Lemprière's look as he spoke of the muscadella that the Queen questioned him closely upon Buonespoir's raid; and so infectious was his mirth as he told the tale that Elizabeth, though she stamped her foot in assumed impatience, smiled also.

"You shall have your Buonespoir, seigneur," she said; "but for his future you shall answer as well as he."

"For what he does in Jersey Isle, your commiserate Majesty?"

"For crime elsewhere, if he be caught, he

shall march to Tyburn, friend," she answered. Then she hurriedly added: "Straightway go and bring mademoiselle and her father hither. Orders are given for their disposal. And to-morrow at this hour you shall wait upon me in their company. I thank you for your services as butler this day, Monsieur of Rozel. You do your office rarely."

As the seigneur left Elizabeth's apartments he met the Earl of Leicester hurrying thither, preceded by the Queen's messenger. Leicester stopped and said, with a slow, malicious smile, "Farming is good, then—you have fine crops this year on your holding?"

The point escaped Lemprière at first, for the favorite's look was all innocence, and he replied: "You are mistook, my lord. You will remember I was in the presence-chamber an hour ago, my lord. I am Lemprière, Seigneur of Rozel, butler to her Majesty."

"But are you, then? I thought you were a farmer and raised cabbages." And, smiling, Leicester passed on.

For a moment the seigneur stood ponder-

ing the earl's words and angrily wondering at his obtuseness. Then suddenly he knew he had been mocked, and he turned and ran after his enemy; but Leicester had vanished into the Queen's apartments.

The Queen's fool was standing near, seemingly engaged in the light occupation of catching imaginary flies, buzzing with his motions. As Leicester disappeared he looked from under his arm at Lemprière. "If a bird will not stop for the salt to its tail, then the salt is damned, Nuncio; and you must cry *David!* and get thee to the quarry."

Lemprière stared at him swelling with rage; but the quaint smiling of the fool conquered him, and, instead of turning on his heel, he spread himself like a Colossus and looked down in grandeur. "And wherefore cry *David!* and get quarrying?" he asked. "Come, what sense is there in thy words when I am wroth with yonder nobleman?"

"Oh, Nuncio, Nuncio, thou art a child of innocence and without history. The salt held not the bird for the net of thy anger,

Nuncio; so it is meet that other ways be found. David the ancient put a stone in a sling, and Goliath laid him down like an egg in a nest—therefore, Nuncio, get thee to the quarry. Obligato, which is to say Leicester yonder, hath no tail—the devil cut it off and wears it himself. So let salt be damned, and go sling thy stone!"

Lemprière was good-humored again. He fumbled in his purse and brought forth a gold-piece. "Fool, thou hast spoken like a man born sensible and infinite. I understand thee like a book. Thou hast not folly, and thou shall not be answered as if thou wast a fool. But in terms of gold shalt thou have reply." He put the gold-piece in the fool's hand and slapped him on the shoulder.

"Why now, Nuncio," answered the other, "it is clear that there is a fool at court, for is it not written that a fool and his money are soon parted? And this gold-piece is still hot with running 'tween thee and me."

Lemprière roared. "Why, then, for thy hit thou shalt have another gold-piece, gossip. But see"—his voice lowered—"know

you where is my friend, Buonespoir the pirate? Know you where he is in durance?"

"As I know marrow in a bone I know where he hides, Nuncio; so come with me," answered the fool.

"If De Carteret had but thy sense we could live at peace in Jersey," rejoined Lemprière, and strode ponderously after the light-footed fool, who capered forth, singing:

"Come hither, O come hither,
There's a bride upon her bed;
They have strewn her o'er with roses,
There are roses 'neath her head:
Life is love and tears and laughter,
But the laughter it is dead—
Sing the way to the valley, to the valley!—
Hey, but the roses they are red!"

IX

THE next day at noon, as her Majesty had advised the seigneur, De la Forêt was ushered into the presence. The Queen's eye quickened as she saw him, and she remarked with secret pleasure the figure and bearing of this young captain of the Huguenots. She loved physical grace and prowess with a full heart. The day had almost passed when she would measure all men against Leicester in his favor; and he, knowing this clearly now, saw with haughty anxiety the gradual passing of his power, and clutched futilely at the vanishing substance. Thus it was that he now spent his strength in getting his way with the Queen in little things. She had been so long used to take his counsel—in some part wise and skilful—

that when she at length did without it or followed her own mind, it became a fever with him to let no chance pass for serving his own will by persuading her out of hers. This was why he had spent an hour the day before in sadly yet vaguely reproaching her for the slight she put upon him in the presence-chamber by her frown, and another in urging her to come to terms with Catherine de' Medici in this small affair—since the Frenchwoman had set her revengeful heart upon it—that larger matters might be settled to the gain of England. It was not so much that he had reason to destroy De la Forêt as that he saw that the Queen was disposed to deal friendly by him and protect him. He did not see the danger of rousing in the Queen the same unreasoning tenaciousness of will upon just such lesser things as might well be left to her advisers. In spite of which he almost succeeded, this very day, in regaining, for a time at least, the ground he had lost with her. He had never been so adroit, so brilliant, so witty, so insinuating; and he left her with the feeling that if he had his

way concerning De la Forêt—a mere stubborn whim, with no fair reason behind it—his influence would be again securely set. The sense of crisis was on him.

On Michel de la Forêt entering the presence the Queen's attention had become riveted. She felt in him a spirit of mastery yet of unselfish purpose. Here was one, she thought, who might well be in her household or leading a regiment of her troops. The clear, fresh face, curling hair, direct look, quiet energy, and air of nobility—this sort of man could only be begotten of a great cause; he were not possible in idle or prosperous times.

Elizabeth looked him up and down, then affected surprise. "Monsieur de la Forêt," she said, "I do not recognize you in this attire"—glancing towards his dress.

De la Forêt bowed, and Elizabeth continued, looking at a paper in her hand: "You landed on our shores of Jersey in the robes of a priest of France. The passport for a priest of France was found upon your person when our officers in Jersey made

search of you. Which is yourself—Michel de la Forêt, soldier, or a priest of France?"

De la Forêt replied, gravely, that he was a soldier and that the priestly dress had been but a disguise.

"In which papist attire, methinks, Michel de la Forêt, soldier and Huguenot, must have been ill at ease—the eagle with the vulture's wing. What say you, monsieur?"

"That vulture's wing hath carried me to a safe dove-cote, your gracious Majesty," he answered, with a low obeisance.

"I'm none so sure of that, monsieur," was Elizabeth's answer, and she glanced quizzically at Leicester, who made a gesture of annoyance. "Our cousin, France, makes you to us a dark intriguer and conspirator, a dangerous weed in our good garden of England, a 'troublous, treacherous violence'—such are you called, monsieur."

"I am in your high Majesty's power," he answered, "to do with me as it seemeth best. If your Majesty wills it that I be returned to France, I pray you set me upon its coast as I came from it, a fugitive. Thence will I try

to find my way to the army and the poor, stricken people of whom I was. I pray for that only, and not to be given to the red hand of the Medici."

"Red hand—by my faith, but you are bold, monsieur!"

Leicester tapped his foot upon the floor impatiently, then caught the Queen's eye and gave her a meaning look.

De la Forêt saw the look and knew his enemy, but he did not quail. "Bold only by your high Majesty's faith, indeed," he answered the Queen, with harmless guile.

Elizabeth smiled. She loved such flattering speech from a strong man. It touched a chord in her deeper than that under Leicester's finger. Leicester's impatience only made her more self-willed on the instant.

"You speak with the trumpet note, monsieur," she said to De la Forêt. "We will prove you. You shall have a company in my Lord Leicester's army here, and we will send you upon some service worthy of your fame."

"I crave your Majesty's pardon, but I cannot do it," was De la Forêt's instant reply.

"I have sworn that I will lift my sword in one cause only, and to that I must stand. And more—the widow of my dead chief, Gabriel de Montgomery, is set down in this land unsheltered and alone. I have sworn to one who loves her, and for my dead chief's sake, that I will serve her and be near her until better days be come and she may return in quietness to France. In exile we few stricken folk must stand together, your august Majesty."

Elizabeth's eye flashed up. She was impatient of refusal of her favor. She was also a woman, and that De la Forêt should flaunt his devotion to another woman was little to her liking. The woman in her, which had never been blessed with a noble love, was roused. The sourness of a childless, uncompanionable life was stronger for the moment than her strong mind and sense.

"Monsieur has sworn this, and monsieur has sworn that," she said, petulantly—"and to one who loveth a lady, and for a cause—tut! tut! tut!—"

Suddenly a kind of intriguing laugh leaped

into her eye, and she turned to Leicester and whispered in his ear. Leicester frowned, then smiled, and glanced up and down De la Forêt's figure impertinently.

"See, Monsieur de la Forêt," she added, "since you will not fight, you shall preach. A priest you came into my kingdom, and a priest you shall remain; but you shall preach good English doctrine and no Popish folly."

De la Forêt started, then composed himself, and before he had time to reply Elizabeth continued:

"Partly for your own sake am I thus gracious, for as a preacher of the Word I have not need to give you up, according to agreement with our brother of France. As a rebel and conspirator I were bound to do so, unless you were an officer of my army. The Seigneur of Rozel has spoken for you, and the Comtesse de Montgomery has written a pleading letter. Also I have from another source a tearful prayer—the ink is scare dry upon it—which has been of service to you. But I myself have chosen this way of escape for you. Prove yourself worthy and

all may be well—but prove yourself you shall. You have prepared your own brine, monsieur; in it you shall pickle."

She smiled a sour smile, for she was piqued, and added: "Do you think I will have you here squiring of distressed dames save as a priest? You shall hence to Madame of Montgomery as her faithful chaplain, once I have heard you preach and know your doctrine."

Leicester almost laughed outright in the young man's face now, for he had no thought that De la Forêt would accept, and refusal meant the exile's doom.

It seemed fantastic that this noble gentleman, this very type of the perfect soldier, with the brown face of a Romany and an athletic valor of body, should become a preacher even in necessity.

Elizabeth, seeing De la Forêt's dumb amazement and anxiety, spoke up sharply: "Do this, or get you hence to the Medici, and Madame of Montgomery shall mourn her protector, and mademoiselle, your mistress of the vermilion cheek, shall have one lover

the less, which, methinks, our Seigneur of Rozel would thank me for."

De la Forêt started, his lips pressed firmly together in effort of restraint. There seemed little the Queen did not know concerning him, and reference to Angèle roused him to sharp solicitude.

"Well, well?" asked Elizabeth, impatiently, then made a motion to Leicester, and he, going to the door, bade some one to enter.

There stepped inside the Seigneur of Rozel, who made a lumbering obeisance, then got to his knees before the Queen.

"You have brought the lady safely—with her father?" she asked.

Lemprière, puzzled, looked inquiringly at the Queen, then replied, "Both are safe without, your infinite Majesty."

De la Forêt's face grew pale. He knew now for the first time that Angèle and her father were in England, and he looked Lemprière suspiciously in the eyes; but the swaggering seigneur met his look frankly, and bowed with ponderous and genial gravity.

Now De la Forêt spoke. "Your high

Majesty," said he, "if I may ask Mademoiselle Aubert one question in your presence—"

"Your answer now; the lady in due season," interposed the Queen.

"She was betrothed to a soldier, she may resent a priest," said De la Forêt, with a touch of humor, for he saw the better way was to take the matter with some outward ease.

Elizabeth smiled. "It is the custom of her sex to have a fondness for both," she answered, with an acid smile. "But your answer?"

De la Forêt's face became exceeding grave. Bowing his head, he said: "My sword has spoken freely for the cause; God forbid that my tongue should not speak also. I will do your Majesty's behest."

The jesting word that was upon the royal lips came not forth, for De la Forêt's face was that of a man who had determined a great thing, and Elizabeth was one who had a heart for high deeds. "The man is brave indeed," she said, under her breath, and,

turning to the dumfounded seigneur, bade him bring in Mademoiselle Aubert.

A moment later, Angèle entered, came a few steps forward, made obeisance, and stood still. She showed no trepidation, but looked before her steadily. She knew not what was to be required of her—she was a stranger in a strange land; but persecution and exile had gone far to strengthen her spirit and greaten her composure.

Elizabeth gazed at the girl coldly and critically. To women she was not overamiable; but as she looked at the young Huguenot maid, of this calm bearing, warm of color, clear of eye, and purposeful of face, something kindled in her. Most like it was that love for a cause which was more to be encouraged by her than any woman's love for a man, which, as she grew older, inspired her with aversion, as talk of marriage brought cynical allusions to her lips.

"I have your letter and its protests and its pleadings. There were fine words and adjurations—are you so religious, then?" she asked, brusquely.

"I am a Huguenot, your noble Majesty," answered the girl, as though that answered all.

"How is it, then, you are betrothed to a roistering soldier?" asked the Queen.

"Some must pray for Christ's sake, and some must fight, your most Christian Majesty," answered the girl.

"Some must do both," rejoined the Queen, in a kinder voice, for the pure spirit of the girl worked upon her. "I am told that Monsieur de la Forêt fights fairly. If he can pray as well, methinks he shall have safety in our kingdom, and ye shall all have peace. On Trinity Sunday you shall preach in my chapel, Monsieur de la Forêt, and thereafter you shall know your fate."

She rose. "My lord," she said to Leicester, on whose face gloom had settled, "you will tell the Lord Chamberlain that Monsieur de la Forêt's durance must be made comfortable in the west tower of my palace till chapel-going of Trinity Day. I will send him for his comfort and instruction some sermons of Latimer's."

She stepped down from the dais. "You will come with me, mistress," she said to Angèle, and reached out her hand.

Angèle fell on her knees and kissed it, tears falling down her cheek, then rose and followed the Queen from the chamber. She greatly desired to look backward towards De la Forêt, but some good angel bade her not; she realized that to offend the Queen at this moment might ruin all; and Elizabeth herself was little like to offer chance for farewell and love-tokens.

So it was that, with bowed head, Angèle left the room with the Queen of England, leaving Lemprière and De la Forêt gazing at each other, the one bewildered, the other lost in painful reverie, and Leicester smiling maliciously at them both.

X

VERY man, if you bring him to the right point, if you touch him in the corner where he is most sensitive, where he most lives, as it were; if you prick his nerves with a needle of suggestion where all his passions, ambitions, and sentiments are at white heat, will readily throw away the whole game of life in some mad act out of harmony with all he ever did. It matters little whether the needle prick him by accident or blunder or design, he will burst all bounds and establish again the old truth that each of us will prove himself a fool given perfect opportunity. Nor need the occasion of this revolution be a great one; the most trivial event may produce the great fire which burns up wisdom, prudence, and habit.

The Earl of Leicester, so long counted astute, clear-headed, and well governed, had been suddenly foisted out of balance, shaken from his imperious composure, tortured out of an assumed and persistent urbanity, by the presence in Greenwich Palace of a Huguenot exile of no seeming importance, save what the Medici grimly gave him by desiring his head. It appeared absurd that the great Leicester, whose nearness to the throne had made him the most feared, most notable, and, by virtue of his opportunities, the most dramatic figure in England, should have sleepless nights by reason of a fugitive like Michel de la Forêt. On the surface it was preposterous that he should see in the Queen's offer of service to the refugee evidence that she was set to grant him special favors; it was equally absurd that her offer of safety to him on pledge of his turning preacher should seem proof that she meant to have him near her.

Elizabeth had left the presence-chamber without so much as a glance at him, though she had turned and looked graciously at the

stranger. He had hastily followed her, and thereafter impatiently awaited a summons which never came, though he had sent a message that his hours were at her Majesty's disposal. Waiting, he saw Angèle's father escorted from the palace by a Gentleman Pensioner to a lodge in the park; he saw Michel de la Forêt taken to his apartments; he saw the Seigneur of Rozel walking in the palace grounds with such possession as though they were his own, self-content in every motion of his body.

Upon the instant the great earl was incensed out of all proportion to the affront of the seigneur's existence. He suddenly hated Lemprière only less than he hated Michel de la Forêt. As he still waited irritably for a summons from Elizabeth, he brooded on every word and every look she had given him of late; he recalled her manner to him in the antechapel the day before, and the admiring look she cast on De la Forêt but now. He had seen more in it than mere approval of courage and the self-reliant bearing of a refugee of her own religion.

These were days when the soldier of fortune mounted to high places. He needed but to carry the banner of bravery and a busy sword, and his way to power was not hindered by poor estate. To be gently born was the one thing needful, and Michel de la Forêt was gently born; and he had still his sword, though he chose not to use it in Elizabeth's service. My lord knew it might be easier for a stranger like De la Forêt, who came with no encumbrance, to mount to place in the struggles of the court, than for an Englishman, whose increasing and ever-bolder enemies were undermining on every hand, to hold his own.

He began to think upon ways and means to meet this sudden preference of the Queen, made sharply manifest, as he waited in the antechamber, by a summons to the refugee to enter the Queen's apartments. When the refugee came forth again he wore a sword the Queen had sent him, and a packet of Latimer's sermons were under his arm. Leicester was unaware that Elizabeth herself did not see De la Forêt when he was

thus hastily called; but that her lady-in-waiting, the Duke's Daughter, who figured so largely in the pictures Lemprière drew of his experiences at Greenwich Palace, brought forth the sermons and the sword, with this message from the Queen:

"The Queen says that it is but fair to the sword to be by Michel de la Forêt's side when the sermons are in his hand, that his choice have every seeming of fairness. For her Majesty says it is still his choice between the Sword and the Book till Trinity Day."

Leicester, however, only saw the sword at the side of the refugee and the gold-bound book under his arm as he came forth, and in a rage he left the palace and gloomily walked under the trees, denying himself to every one.

To seize De la Forêt, and send him to the Medici, and then rely on Elizabeth's favor for his pardon, as he had done in the past? That might do, but the risk to England was too great. It would be like the Queen, if her temper was up, to

demand from the Medici the return of De la Forêt, and war might ensue. Two women, with two nations behind them, were not to be played lightly against each other, trusting to their common-sense and humor.

As he walked among the trees, brooding with averted eyes, he was suddenly faced by the Seigneur of Rozel, who also was shaken from his discretion and the best interests of the two fugitives he was bound to protect by a late offence against his own dignity. A seed of rancor had been sown in his mind which had grown to a great size, and must presently burst into a dark flower of vengeance. He, Lemprière of Rozel, with three dove-cotes, the *perquage*, and the office of butler to the Queen, to be called a "farmer," to be sneered at—it was not in the blood of man, not in the towering vanity of a Lemprière, to endure it at any price computable to mortal mind.

Thus there were in England on that day two fools (there are as many now), and one said:

"My Lord Leicester, I crave a word with you."

"Crave on, good fellow," responded Leicester, with a look of boredom, making to pass by.

"I am Lemprière, Lord of Rozel, my lord—"

"Ah yes, I took you for a farmer," answered Leicester. "Instead of that, I believe you keep doves, and wear a jerkin that fits like a king's. Dear Lord, so does greatness come with girth!"

"The king that gave me dove-cotes gave me honor, and 'tis not for the Earl of Leicester to belittle it."

"What is your coat of arms?" said Leicester, with a faint smile, but in an assumed tone of natural interest.

"A swan upon a sea of azure, two stars above, and over all a sword with a wreath around its point," answered Lemprière, simply, unsuspecting irony, and touched by Leicester's flint where he was most like to flare up with vanity.

"Ah!" said Leicester. "And the motto?"

"Mea spes supra stellas—my hope is beyond the stars."

"And the wreath—of parsley, I suppose?"

Now Lemprière understood, and he shook with fury as he roared:

"Yes, by God, and to be got at the point of the sword, to put on the heads of insolents like Lord Leicester!" His face was flaming, he was like a cock strutting upon a stable mound.

There fell a slight pause, and then Leicester said, "To-morrow at daylight, eh?"

"Now, my lord, now!"

"We have no seconds."

"'Sblood! 'Tis not your way, my lord, to be stickling in detail of courtesy."

"'Tis not the custom to draw swords in secret, Lemprière of Rozel. Also, my teeth are not on edge to fight you."

Lemprière had already drawn his sword, and the look of his eyes was as that of a mad bull in a ring. "You won't fight with me—you don't think Rozel your equal?" His voice was high.

Leicester's face took on a hard, cruel look.

"We cannot fight among the ladies," he said, quietly.

Lemprière followed his glance, and saw the Duke's Daughter and another in the trees near by.

He hastily put up his sword. "When, my lord?" he asked.

"You will hear from me to-night," was the answer, and Leicester went forward hastily to meet the ladies—they had news, no doubt.

Lemprière turned on his heel and walked quickly away among the trees towards the quarters where Buonespoir was in durance, which was little more severe than to keep him within the palace yard. There he found the fool and the pirate in whimsical converse. The fool had brought a letter of inquiry and warm greeting from Angèle to Buonespoir, who was laboriously inditing one in return. When Lemprière entered the pirate greeted him jovially.

"In the very pinch of time!" he said. "You have grammar and syntax and etiquette."

"'Tis even so, Nuncio," said the fool. "Here is needed prosody potential. Exhale!"

The three put their heads together above the paper.

XI

WOULD know your story. How came you and yours to this pass? Where were you born? Of what degree are you? And this Michel de la Forêt, when came he to your feet—or you to his arms? I would know all. Begin where life began; end where you sit here at the feet of Elizabeth. This other cushion to your knees. There—now speak. We are alone."

Elizabeth pushed a velvet cushion towards Angèle, where she half-knelt, half-sat on the rush-strewn floor of the great chamber. The warm light of the afternoon sun glowed through the thick-tinted glass high up, and in the gleam the heavy tapestries sent by an archduke, once suitor for her hand,

emerged with dramatic distinctness, and peopled the room with silent watchers of the great Queen and the nobly born but poor and fugitive Huguenot. A splendid piece of sculpture—Eleanor, wife of Edward—given Elizabeth by another royal suitor, who had sought to be her consort through many years, caught the warm bath of gold and crimson from the clerestory and seemed alive and breathing. Against the pedestal the Queen had placed her visitor, the red cushions making vivid contrast to her white gown and black hair. In the half-kneeling, half-sitting posture, with her hands clasped before her, so to steady herself to composure, Angèle looked a suppliant—and a saint. Her pure, straightforward gaze, her smooth, urbane forehead, the guilelessness that spoke in every feature, were not made worldly by the intelligence and humor reposing in the brown depths of her eyes. Not a line vexed her face or forehead. Her countenance was of a singular and almost polished smoothness, and though her gown was severely simple by comparison with silks and velvets,

furs and ruffles of a gorgeous court at its most gorgeous period, yet in it here and there were touches of exquisite fineness. The black velvet ribbon slashing her sleeves, the slight, cloudlike gathering of lace at the back of her head, gave a distinguished softness to her appearance.

She was in curious contrast to the Queen, who sat upon heaped-up cushions, her rich buff-and-black gown a blaze of jewels, her yellow hair, now streaked with gray, roped with pearls, her hands heavy with rings, her face past its youth, past its hopefulness, however noble and impressive, past its vivid beauty. Her eyes wore ever a determined look, were persistent and vigilant, with a lurking trouble, yet flooded, too, by a quiet melancholy, like a low, insistent note that floats through an opera of passion, romance, and tragedy; like a tone of pathos giving deep character to some splendid pageant, which praises while it commemorates, proclaiming conquest while the grass has not yet grown on quiet houses of the children of the sword who no more wield the sword.

Evasive, cautious, secretive, creator of her own policy, she had sacrificed her womanhood to the power she held and the State she served. Vain, passionate, and faithful, her heart all England and Elizabeth, the hunger for glimpses of what she had never known, and was never to know, thrust itself into her famished life; and she was wont to indulge, as now, in fancies and follow some emotional whim with a determination very like to eccentricity.

That, at this time, when great national events were forward, when conspiracies abounded, when Parliament was grimly gathering strength to compel her to marry; and her council were as sternly pursuing their policy for the destruction of Leicester; while that very day had come news of a rising in the north and of fresh Popish plots hatched in France—that in such case, this day she should set aside all business, refuse ambassadors and envoys admission, and occupy herself with two Huguenot refugees seemed incredible to the younger courtiers. To such as Cecil, however, there was clear

understanding. He knew that when she seemed most inert, most impassive to turbulent occurrences, most careless of consequences, she was but waiting till, in her own mind, her plans were grown; so that she should see her end clearly ere she spoke or moved. Now, as the great minister showed himself at the door of the chamber and saw Elizabeth seated with Angèle, he drew back instinctively, expectant of the upraised hand which told him he must wait. And, in truth, he was nothing loath to do so, for his news he cared little to deliver, important though it was that she should have it promptly and act upon it soon. He turned away with a feeling of relief, however, for this gossip with the Huguenot maid would no doubt interest her, give new direction to her warm sympathies, which, if roused in one thing, were ever more easily roused in others. He knew that a crisis was nearing in the royal relations with Leicester. In a life of devotion to her service he had seen her before in this strange mood, and he could feel that she was ready for an outburst. As he

thought of De la Forêt and the favor with which she had looked at him, he smiled grimly, for, if it meant aught, it meant that it would drive Leicester to some act which would hasten his own doom; though, indeed, it might also make another path more difficult for himself, for the Parliament, for the people.

Little as Elizabeth could endure tales of love and news of marriage; little as she believed in any vows, save those made to herself; little as she was inclined to adjust the rough courses of true love, she was the surgeon to this particular business, and she had the surgeon's love of laying bare even to her own cynicism the hurt of the poor patient under her knife. Indeed, so had Angèle impressed her that for once she thought she might hear the truth. Because she saw the awe in the other's face, and a worshipping admiration of the great protectress of Protestanism, who had by large gifts of men and money in times past helped the cause, she looked upon her here with kindness.

"Speak now, mistress fugitive, and I will

listen," she added, as Cecil withdrew; and she made a motion to musicians in a distant gallery.

Angèle's heart fluttered to her mouth, but the soft, simple music helped her, and she began with eyes bent upon the ground, her linked fingers clasping and unclasping slowly.

"I was born at Rouen, your high Majesty," she said. "My mother was a cousin of the Prince of Passy, the great Protestant—"

"Of Passy—ah!" said Elizabeth, amazed. "Then you are Protestants indeed; and your face is no invention, but cometh honestly. No, no, 'tis no accident—God rest his soul, great Passy!"

"She died—my mother—when I was a little child. I can but just remember her—so brightly quiet, so quick, so beautiful. In Rouen life had little motion; but now and then came stir and turmoil, for war sent its message into the old streets, and our captains and our peasants poured forth to fight for the King. Once came the King and Queen —Francis and Mary—"

Elizabeth drew herself upright with an exclamation.

"Ah, you have seen her—Mary of Scots," she said, sharply. "You have seen her?"

"As near as I might touch her with my hand, as near as is your high Majesty. She spoke to me—my mother's father was in her train; as yet we had not become Huguenots, nor did we know her Majesty as now the world knows. Then came the King and Queen, and that was the beginning."

She paused, and looked shyly at Elizabeth, as though she found it hard to tell her story.

"And the beginning, it was—?" said Elizabeth, impatient and intent.

"We went to court. The Queen called my mother into her train. But it was in no wise for our good. At court my mother pined away—and so she died in durance."

"Wherefore in durance?"

"To what she saw she would not shut her eyes; to what she heard she would not close her soul; what was required of her she would not do."

"She would not obey the Queen?"

"She could not obey those whom the Queen favored. Then the tyranny that broke her heart--".

The Queen interrupted her.

"In very truth, but 'tis not in France alone that Queen's favorites grasp the sceptre and speak the word. Hath a queen a thousand eyes—can she know truth where most dissemble?"

"There was a man—he could not know there was one true woman there, who for her daughter's sake, for her desired advancement, and because she was cousin of Passy, who urged it, lived that starved life; this man, this prince, drew round her feet snares, set pitfalls for her while my father was sent upon a mission. Steadfast she kept her soul unspotted; but it wore away her life. The Queen would not permit return to Rouen—who can tell what tale was told her by one whom she foiled? And so she stayed. In this slow, savage persecution, when she was like a bird that, thinking it is free, flieth against the window-pane and falleth back beaten, so did she stay, and none could save

her. To cry out, to throw herself upon the spears, would have been ruin of herself, her husband, and her child; and for these she lived."

Elizabeth's eyes had kindled. Perhaps never in her life had the life at court been so exposed to her. The simple words, meant but to convey the story, and with no thought behind, had thrown a light on her own court, on her own position. Adept in weaving a sinuous course in her policy, in making mazes for others to tread, the mazes which they in turn prepared had never before been traced beneath her eyes to the same vivid and ultimate effect.

"Help me, ye saints, but things are not at such a pass in this place!" she said, abruptly, but with weariness in her voice. "Yet sometimes I know not. The court is a city by itself, walled and moated, and hath a life all its own. '*If there be found ten honest men within the city, yet will I save it,*' saith the Lord. By my father's head, I would not risk a finger on the hazard if this city, this court of Elizabeth, were set 'twixt the fire

from heaven and eternal peace. In truth, child, I would lay me down and die in black disgust were it not that one might come hereafter would make a very Sodom or Gomorrah of this land; and out yonder—out in all my counties, where the truth of England is among my poor burgesses, who die for the great causes which my nobles profess but risk not their lives—out yonder all that they have won, and for which I have striven, would be lost. . . . Speak on. I have not heard so plain a tongue and so little guile these twenty years."

Angèle continued, more courage in her voice: "In the midst of it all came the wave of the new faith upon my mother. And before ill could fall upon her from her foes, she died, and was at rest. Then we returned to Rouen, my father and I, and there we lived in peril, but in great happiness of soul, until the day of massacre. That night in Paris we were given greatly of the mercy of God."

"You were there—you were in the massacre at Paris?"

"In the house of the Duke of Lançon, with whom was resting, after a hazardous enterprise, Michel de la Forêt."

"And here beginneth the second lesson," said the Queen, with a smile on her lips; but there was a look of scrutiny in her eyes and something like irony in her tone. "And I will swear by all the stars of heaven that this Michel saved ye both. Is it not so?"

"It is even so. By his skill and bravery we found our way to safety, and in a hiding-place near to our loved Rouen watched him return from the gates of death."

"He was wounded, then?"

"Seven times wounded, and with as little blood left in him as would fill a cup. But it was summer, and we were in the hills, and they brought us, our friends of Rouen, all that we had need of; and so God was with us."

"But did he save thy life, except by skill, by indirect and fortunate wisdom? Was there deadly danger upon thee? Did he beat down the sword of death?"

"He saved my life thrice directly. The

wounds he carried were got by interposing his own sword 'twixt death and me."

"And that hath need of recompense?"

"My life was little worth the wounds he suffered; but I waited not until he saved it to owe it unto him. All that it is was his before he drew his sword."

"And 'tis this ye would call love betwixt ye—sweet givings and takings of looks, and soft sayings, and unchangeable and devouring faith. Is't this—and is this all?"

The girl had spoken out of an innocent heart, but the challenge in the Queen's voice worked upon her, and, though she shrank a little, the fulness of her soul welled up and strengthened her. She spoke again, and now in her need and in her will to save the man she loved, by making this majesty of England his protector, her words had eloquence.

"It is not all, noble Queen. Love is more than that. It is the waking in the poorest minds, in the most barren souls, of something greater than themselves—as a chemist should find a substance that would give all other

things by touching of them a new and higher value; as light and sun draw from the earth the tendrils of the seed that else had lain unproducing. 'Tis not alone soft words and touch of hand or lip. This caring wholly for one outside one's self kills that self which else would make the world blind and deaf and dumb. None hath loved greatly but hath helped to love in others. Ah, most sweet Majesty, for great souls like thine, souls born great, this medicine is not needful, for already hath the love of a nation inspired and enlarged it; but for souls like mine, and of so many, none better and none worse than me, to love one other soul deeply and abidingly lifts us higher than ourselves. Your Majesty hath been loved by a whole people, by princes and great men in a different sort—is it not the world's talk that none that ever reigned hath drawn such slavery of princes, and of great nobles who have courted death for hopeless love of one beyond their star? And is it not written in the world's book also that the Queen of England hath loved no man, but hath poured out her heart to a people; and

hath served great causes in all the earth because of that love which hath still enlarged her soul, dowered at birth beyond reckoning." Tears filled her eyes. "Ah, your supreme Majesty, to you whose heart is universal, the love of one poor mortal seemeth a small thing, but to those of little consequence it is the cable by which they unsteadily hold over the chasm 'twixt life and immortality. To thee, oh greatest monarch of the world, it is a staff on which thou needest not lean, which thou hast never grasped; to me it is my all; without it I fail and fall and die."

She had spoken as she felt, yet, because she was a woman and guessed the mind of another woman, she had touched Elizabeth where her armor was weakest. She had suggested that the Queen had been the object of adoration, but had never given her heart to any man; that hers was the virgin heart and life; and that she had never stooped to conquer. Without realizing it, and only dimly moving with that end in view, she had whetted Elizabeth's vanity. She had,

indeed, soothed a pride wounded of late beyond endurance, suspecting, as she did, that Leicester had played his long part for his own sordid purposes, that his devotion was more alloy than precious metal. No note of praise could be pitched too high for Elizabeth, and if only policy did not intervene, if but no political advantage was lost by saving De la Forêt, that safety seemed now secure.

"You tell a tale and adorn it with good grace," she said, and held out her hand. Angèle kissed it. "And you have said to Elizabeth what none else dared to say since I was Queen here. He who hath never seen the lightning hath no dread of it. I had not thought there was in the world so much artlessness, with all the power of perfect art. But we live to be wiser. Thou shalt continue in thy tale. Thou hast seen Mary, once Queen of France, now Queen of Scots—answer me fairly, without if, or though, or any sort of doubt, the questions I shall put. Which of us twain, this ruin-starred Queen or I, is of higher stature?"

"She hath advantage in little of your Majesty," bravely answered Angèle.

"Then," answered Elizabeth, sourly, "she is too high, for I, myself, am neither too high nor too low. . . . And of complexion, which is the fairer?"

"Her complexion is the fairer, but your Majesty's countenance hath truer beauty and sweeter majesty."

Elizabeth frowned slightly, then said:

"What exercises did she take when you were at the court?"

"Sometimes she hunted, your Majesty, and sometimes she played upon the virginals."

"Did she play to effect?"

"Reasonably, your noble Majesty."

"You shall hear me play, and then speak truth upon us, for I have known none with so true a tongue since my father died."

Thereon she called to a lady who waited near in a little room to bring an instrument; but at that moment Cecil appeared again at the door, and, his face seeming to show anxiety, Elizabeth, with a sign, beckoned him to enter.

"Your face, Cecil, is as long as a Lenten collect. What raven croaks in England on May Day eve?"

Cecil knelt before her, and gave into her hand a paper.

"What record runs here?" she asked, querulously.

"A prayer of your faithful Lords and Commons that your Majesty will grant speech with their chosen deputies to lay before your Majesty a cause they have at heart."

"Touching of—?" darkly asked the Queen.

"The deputies wait even now—will not your Majesty receive them? They have come humbly, and will go hence as humbly on the instant, if the hour is ill chosen."

Immediately Elizabeth's humor changed. A look of passion swept across her face, but her eyes lighted and her lips smiled proudly. She avoided troubles by every means, fought off by subtleties the issues which she must meet; but when the inevitable hour came none knew so well to meet it as though it were a dearest friend, no matter what the danger, how great the stake.

"They are here at my door, these good servants of the state—shall they be kept dangling?" she said, loudly. "Though it were time for prayers and God's mercy, yet should they speak with me, have my counsel, or my hand upon the sacred parchment of the state. Bring them hither, Cecil. Now we shall see— Now you shall see, Angèle of Rouen—now you shall see how queens shall have no hearts to call their own, but be head and heart and soul and body at the will of every churl who thinks he serves the state and knows the will of Heaven. Stand here at my left hand. Mark the players and the play."

Kneeling, the deputies presented a resolution from the Lords and Commons that the Queen should, without more delay, in keeping with her oft-expressed resolve and the promise of her council, appoint one who should succeed to the throne in case of her death "without posterity." Her faithful people pleaded with her gracious Majesty to forego unwillingness to marry, and seek a consort worthy of her supreme consideration,

to be raised to a place beside her near that throne which she had made the greatest in the world.

Gravely, solemnly, the chief members of the Lords and Commons spoke, and with as weighty pauses and devoted protestations as though this were the first time their plea had been urged, this obvious duty had been set out before her. Long ago, in the flush and pride of her extreme youth and the full assurance of the fruits of marriage, they had spoken with the same sober responsibility; and though her youth had gone and the old certainty had forever disappeared, they spoke of her marriage and its consequences as though it were still that far-off yesterday. Well for them that they did so, for though time had flown and royal suitors without number had become figures dim in the people's mind, Elizabeth, fed upon adulation, invoked, admired, besieged by young courtiers, flattered by maids who praised her beauty, had never seen the hands of the clock pass high noon, and still remained under the dearest and saddest illusion which can rest

in a woman's mind. Long after the hands of life's clock had moved into afternoon, the ancient prayer was still gravely presented that she should marry and give an heir to England's crown; and she as solemnly listened and dropped her eyes, and strove to hide her virgin modesty behind a high demeanor which must needs sink self in royal duty.

"These be the dear desires of your supreme Majesty's faithful Lords and Commons and the people of the shires whose wills they represent. Your Majesty's life, God grant it last beyond that of the youngest of your people so greatly blessed in your rule! But accidents of time be many; and while the world is full of guile, none can tell what peril may beset the crown, if your Majesty's wisdom sets not apart, gives not to her country, one whom the nation can surround with its care, encompass lovingly by its duty."

The talk with Angèle had had a curious influence upon the Queen. It was plain that now she was moved by real feeling, and that, though she deceived herself, or pretended so to do, shutting her eyes to sober facts and

dreaming old dreams—as it were, in a world where never was a mirror nor a timepiece—yet there was working in her a fresher spirit, urging her to a fairer course than she had shaped for many a day.

"My lords and gentlemen, and my beloved subjects," she answered presently, and for an instant set her eyes upon Angèle, then turned to them again, "I pray you stand and hear me. . . . Ye have spoken fair words to my face, and of my face, and of the person of this daughter of great Henry, from whom I got whatever grace or manner or favor is to me; and by all your reasoning you do flatter the heart of the Queen of England, whose mind indeed sleeps not in deed or desire for this realm. Ye have drawn a fair picture of this mortal me, and though from the grace of the picture the colors may fade by time, may give by weather, may be spoiled by chance, yet my loyal mind, nor time with her swift wings shall overtake, nor the misty clouds may darken, nor chance with her slippery foot may overthrow. It sets its course by the heart of England, and when it passeth

there shall be found that one shall be left behind who shall be surety of all that hath been lying in the dim warehouse of fate for England's high future. Be sure that in this thing I have entered into the weigh-house, and I hold the balance, and ye shall be well satisfied. Ye have been fruitful in counsel, ye have been long knitting a knot never tied, ye shall have comfort soon. But know ye beyond peradventure that I have bided my time with good reason. If our loom be framed with rotten hurdles, when our web is wellny done, our work is yet to begin. Against mischance and dark discoveries my mind, with knowledge hidden from you, hath been firmly arrayed. If it be in your thought that I am set against a marriage which shall serve the nation, purge yourselves, friends, of that sort of heresy, for the belief is awry. Though I think that to be one and always one, neither mated nor mothering, be good for a private woman, for a prince it is not meet. Therefore, say to my Lords and Commons that I am more concerned for what shall chance to England when I am gone

than to linger out my living thread. I hope, my lords and gentlemen, to die with a good 'Nunc Dimittis,' which could not be if I did not give surety for the nation after my graved bones. Ye shall hear soon—ye shall hear and be satisfied, and so I give you to the care of Almighty God."

Once more they knelt, and then slowly withdrew, with faces downcast and troubled. They had secret knowledge which she did not yet possess, but which at any moment she must know, and her ambiguous speech carried no conviction to their minds. Yet their conference with her was most opportune, for the news she must presently receive, brought by a messenger from Scotland who had outstripped all others, would no doubt move her to action which should set the minds of the people at rest, and go far to stem the tide of conspiracy flowing through the kingdom.

Elizabeth stood watching them, and remained gazing after they had disappeared; then, rousing herself, she turned to leave the room, and beckoned to Angèle to follow.

XII

S twilight was giving place to night Angèle was roused from the revery into which she had fallen, by the Duke's Daughter, who whispered to her that if she would have a pleasure given to but few, she would come quickly. Taking her hand, the Duke's Daughter—as bright and true and whimsical a spirit as ever lived in troubled days and under the ægis of the sword—led her swiftly to the Queen's chamber. They did not enter, but waited in a quiet gallery.

"The Queen is playing upon the virginals, and she playeth best when alone; so stand you here by this tapestry, and you shall have reward beyond payment," said the Duke's Daughter.

Angèle had no thought that the Queen of

her vanity had commanded that she be placed there as though secretly, and she listened dutifully at first; but presently her ears were ravished; and even the Duke's Daughter showed some surprise, for never had she heard the Queen play with such grace and feeling. The countenance of the musician was towards them, and, at last, as if by accident, Elizabeth looked up and saw the face of her lady.

"Spy! spy!" she cried; "come hither—come hither, all of you!"

When they had descended and knelt to her, she made as if she would punish the Duke's Daughter by striking her with a scarf that lay at her hand, but to Angèle she said:

"How think you, then, hath that other greater skill—Darnley's wife, I mean?"

"Not she or any other hath so delighted me," said Angèle, with worship in her eyes—so doth talent to majesty become lifted beyond its measure.

The Queen's eyes lighted. "We shall have dancing, then," she said. "The dance hath charms for me. We shall not deny our

youth. The heart shall keep as young as the body."

An instant later the room was full of dancers, and Elizabeth gave her hand to Leicester, who bent every faculty to pleasing her. His face had darkened as he had seen Angèle beside her, but the Queen's graciousness, whether assumed or real, had returned, and her face carried a look of triumph and spirit and delight. Again and again she glanced towards Angèle, and what she saw evidently gave her pleasure, for she laughed and disported herself with grace and an agreeable temper, and Leicester lent himself to her spirit with adroit wit and humility. He had seen his mistake of the morning, and was now intent to restore himself to favor.

He succeeded well, for the emotions roused in Elizabeth during the day, now heightened by vanity and emulation, found in him a centre upon which they could converge; and, in her mind, Angèle, for the nonce, was disassociated from any thought of De la Forêt. Leicester's undoubted gifts were well and

cautiously directed, and his gift of assumed passion—his heart was facile, and his gallantry knew no bounds—was put to dexterous use, convincing for the moment. The Queen seemed all complaisance again. Presently she had Angèle brought to her.

"How doth her dance compare—she who hath wedded Darnley?"

"She danceth not so high nor disposedly, with no such joyous lightness as your high Majesty, but yet she moveth with circumspection."

"Circumspection—circumspection—that is no gift in dancing, which should be wilful yet airily composed, thoughtless yet inducing. Circumspection!—in nothing else hath Mary shown it where she should. 'Tis like this Queen perversely to make a psalm of dancing, and then pirouette with sacred duty. But you have spoken the truth, and I am well content. So get you to your rest."

She tapped Angèle's cheek. "You shall remain here to-night, 'tis too late for you to be sent abroad."

She was about to dismiss her, when there

was a sudden stir. Cecil had entered and was making his way to the Queen, followed by two strangers. Elizabeth waited their approach.

"Your gracious Majesty," said Cecil, in a voice none heard save Elizabeth, for all had fallen back at a wave of her hand, "the Queen of Scots is the mother of a fair son."

Elizabeth's face flushed, then became pale, and she struck her knee with her clinched hand. "Who bringeth the news?" she inquired, in a sharp voice.

"Sir Andrew Melvill here."

"Who is with him yonder?"

"One who hath been attached to the Queen of Scots."

"He hath the ill look of such an one," she answered, and then said below her breath, bitterly: "She hath a son—and I am but a barren stock."

Rising, she added, hurriedly, "We will speak to the people at the May Day sports to-morrow. Let there be great feasting."

She motioned to Sir Andrew Melvill to

come forward, and with a gesture of welcome and a promise of speech with him on the morrow she dismissed them.

Since the two strangers had entered, Angèle's eyes had been fastened on the gentleman who accompanied Sir Andrew Melvill. Her first glance at him had sent a chill through her, and she remained confused and disturbed. In vain her memory strove to find where the man was set in her past. The time, the place, the event eluded her, but a sense of foreboding possessed her; and her eyes followed him with strained anxiety as he retired from the presence.

XIII

S had been arranged when Lemprière challenged Leicester, they met soon after dawn among the trees beside the Thames. A gentleman of the court, to whom the Duke's Daughter had previously presented Lemprière, gayly agreed to act as second, and gallantly attended the Lord of Rozel in his adventurous enterprise. There were few at court who had not some grudge against Leicester, few who would not willingly have done duty at such a time; for Leicester's friends were of fair-weather sort, ready to defend him, to support him, not for friendship, but for the crumbs that dropped from the table of his power. The favorite himself was attended by the Earl of Ealing, a youngster who had his spurs to win, who thought

it policy to serve the great time-server. Two others also came.

It was a morning little made for deeds of rancor or of blood. As they passed, the early morning mists above the green fields of Kent and Essex were being melted by the summer sun. The smell of ripening fruit came on them with pungent sweetness, their feet crashed odorously through clumps of tiger-lilies, and the dew on the ribbon-grass shook glistening drops upon their velvets. Overhead the carolling of the thrush came swimming recklessly through the trees, and far over in the fields the ploughmen started upon the heavy courses of their labor; while here and there a poacher with bow and arrow slid through the green undergrowth, like spies hovering on an army's flank.

To Lemprière the morning carried no impression save that life was well worth living. No agitation passed across his nerves, no apprehension reached his mind. He had no imagination; he loved the things that his eyes saw because they filled him with enjoyment; but why they were, or whence they

came, or what they meant or boded, never gave him meditation. A vast epicurean, a consummate egotist, ripe with feeling and rich with energy, he could not believe that when he spoke the heavens would not fall. The stinging sweetness of the morning was a tonic to all his energies, an elation to his mind; he swaggered through the lush grasses and boskage as though marching to a marriage.

Leicester, on his part, no more caught at the meaning of the morning, at the long whisper of enlivened nature, than did his foe. The day gave to him no more than was his right. If the day was not fine, then Leicester was injured; but if the day was fine, then Leicester had his due. Moral blindness made him blind for the million deep teachings trembling round him. He felt only the garish and the splendid. So it was that at Kenilworth, where his Queen had visited him, the fêtes that he had held would far outshine the fête which would take place in Greenwich Park on this May Day. The fête of this May Day would take place, but would he

see it? The thought flashed through his mind that he might not; but he trod it underfoot; not through an inborn, primitive egotism like that of Lemprière, but through an innate arrogance, an unalterable belief that fate was ever on his side. He had played so many tricks with fate, had mocked while taking its gifts so often, that, like the son who has flouted his indulgent father through innumerable times, he conceived that he should never be disinherited. It irked him that he should be fighting with a farmer, as he termed the seigneur of the Jersey isle; but there was in the event, too, a sense of relief, for he had a will for murder. Yesterday's events were still fresh in his mind; and he had a feeling that the letting of Lemprière's blood would cool his own and be some cure for the choler which the presence of these strangers at the court had wrought in him.

There were better swordsmen in England than he, but his skill was various, and he knew tricks of the trade which this primitive Norman could never have learned. He had

some touch of wit, some biting observation, and, as he neared the place of the encounter, he played upon the coming event with a mordant frivolity. Not by nature a brave man, he was so much a fatalist, such a worshipper of his star, that he had acquired an artificial courage which had served him well. The unschooled gentlemen with him roared with laughter at his sallies, and they came to the place of meeting as though to a summer feast.

"Good-morrow, nobility," said Leicester, with courtesy overdone, and bowing much too low.

"Good-morrow, valentine," answered Lemprière, flushing slightly at the disguised insult and rising to the moment.

"I hear the crop of fools is short this year in Jersey, and through no fault of yours—you've done your best most loyally," jeered Leicester, as he doffed his doublet, his gentlemen laughing in derision.

"'Tis true enough, my lord, and I have come to find new seed in England, where are fools to spare; as I trust in Heaven one shall

be spared on this very day for planting yonder."

He was eaten with rage, but he was cool and steady. He was now in his linen and small-clothes, and looked like some untrained Hercules.

"Well said, nobility," laughed Leicester, with an ugly look. "'Tis seed-time—let us measure out the seed. On guard!"

Never were two men such opposites, never two so seemingly ill-matched. Leicester's dark face and its sardonic look, his lithe figure, the nervous strength of his bearing, were in strong contrast to the bulking breadth, the perspiring robustness of Lemprière of Rozel. It was not easy of belief that Lemprière should be set to fight this matadore of a fighting court. But there they stood, Lemprière's face with a great-eyed gravity looming above his rotund figure like a moon above a purple cloud. But huge and loose though the seigneur's motions seemed, he was as intent as though there were but two beings in the universe, Leicester and himself. A strange alertness

seemed to be upon him, and, as Leicester found when the swords crossed, he was quicker than his bulk gave warrant. His perfect health made his vision sure; and, though not a fine swordsman, he had done much fighting in his time, had been ever ready for the touch of steel, and had served some warlike days in fighting France, where fate had well befriended him. That which Leicester meant should be by-play of a moment became a full half-hour's desperate game. Leicester found that the thrust—the fatal thrust learned from an Italian master—he meant to give was met by a swift precision, responding to quick vision. Again and again he would have brought the end, but Lemprière heavily foiled him. The wound which the seigneur got at last, meant to be mortal, was saved from that by the facility of a quick apprehension.

Indeed, for a time the issue had seemed doubtful, for the endurance and persistence of the seigneur made for exasperation and recklessness in his antagonist, and once blood was drawn from the wrist of the great man;

but at length Lemprière went upon the aggressive. Here he erred, for Leicester found the chance for which he had manœuvred—to use the feint and thrust got out of Italy. He brought his enemy low, but only after a duel the like of which had never been seen at the court of England. The matadore had slain his bull at last, but had done no justice to his reputation. Never did man more gallantly sustain his honor with heaviest odds against him than did the Seigneur of Rozel that day.

As he was carried away by the merry gentlemen of the court, he called back to the favorite:

"Leicester is not so great a swordsman, after all. Hang fast to your honors by the skin of your teeth, my lord."

XIV

T was Monday, and the eyes of London and the court were turned towards Greenwich Park, where the Queen was to give entertainment to the French envoy who had come once more to urge upon the Queen marriage with a son of the Medici, and to obtain an assurance that she would return to France the widow of the great Montgomery and his valiant lieutenant, Michel de la Forêt. The river was covered with boats and barges, festooned, canopied, and hung with banners and devices; and from sunrise music and singing conducted down the stream the gayly dressed populace—for those were the days when a man spent on his ruff and his hose and his russet coat as much as would feed and house

a family for a year; when the fine-figured ruffler with sables about his neck, corked slipper, trimmed buskin, and cloak of silk or damask furred, carried his all upon his back.

Loud-voiced gallants came floating by; men of a hundred guilds bearing devices pompously held on their way to the great pageant; country bumpkins up from Surrey roistered and swore that there was but one land that God had blessed, and challenged the grinning watermen from Gravesend and Hampton Court to deny it; and the sun with ardor drove from the sky every invading cloud, leaving Essex and Kent, as far as eye could see, perfect green gardens of opulence.

Before Elizabeth had left her bed, London had emptied itself in Greenwich Park. Thither the London companies had come in their varied dazzling accoutrements—hundreds armed in fine corselets bearing the long Moorish pike; tall halberdiers in the unique armor called Almain-rivets, and gunners or muleteers equipped in shirts of mail, with

morions or steel caps. Here, too, were to come the Gentlemen Pensioners, resplendent in scarlet, to "run with the spear"; and hundreds of men-at-arms were set at every point to give garish bravery to all. Thousands of citizens, open-mouthed, gazed down the long arenas of green festooned with every sort of decoration and picturesque invention. Cages of large birds from the Indies, fruits, corn, fishes, grapes hung in the trees, players perched in the branches discoursed sweet music, and poets recited their verses from rustic bridges or on platforms with weapons and armor hung trophywise on ragged staves. Upon a small lake a dolphin, four-and-twenty feet in length, came swimming, within its belly a lively orchestra; Italian tumblers swung from rope to bar; and crowds gathered at the places where bear and bull baiting were to excite the none too fastidious tastes of the time.

All morning the gay delights went on, and at high noon the cry was carried from mouth to mouth, "The Queen! The Queen!"

She appeared on a balcony, surrounded by

her lords and ladies, and there received the diplomatists, speaking at length to the French envoy in a tone of lightness and elusive cheerfulness which he was at a loss to understand, and tried in vain to pierce by cogent remarks bearing on matters of moment involved in his embassage. Not far away stood Leicester, but the Queen had done no more than note his presence by a glance, and now and again with ostentatious emphasis she spoke to Angèle, whom she had had brought to her in the morning before chapel-going. Thus early, after a few questions and some scrutiny, she had sent her in charge of a gentleman-at-arms and a maid of the Duke's Daughter to her father's lodging, with orders to change her robe, to return to the palace in good time before noon, and to bring her father to a safe place where he could watch the pleasures of the people. When Angèle came to the presence again, she saw that the Queen was wearing a gown of pure white, with the sleeves shot with black, such as she herself had worn when admitted to audience yesterday. Vexed,

agitated, imbittered as Elizabeth had been by the news brought to her the night before, she had kept her wardrobers and seamstresses at work the whole night to alter a white satin habit to the simplicity and style of that which Angèle had worn.

"What think you of my gown, my lady refugee?" she said to Angèle, at last, as the Gentlemen Pensioners paraded in the space below, followed by the Knights-Tilters—at their head the Queen's champion, Sir Henry Lee: twenty-five of the most gallant and favored of the courtiers of Elizabeth, including the gravest of her counsellors and the youngest gallant who had won her smile, Master Christopher Hatton. Some of these brave suitors, taken from the noblest families, had appeared in the tilt-yard every anniversary of the year of her accession and had lifted their romantic office, which seemed but the service of enamoured knights, into an almost solemn dignity.

The vast crowd disposed itself around the great improvised yard where the Knights-Tilters were to engage, and the Queen, fol-

lowed by her retinue, descended to the dais which had been set up near the palace. Her white satin gown, roped with pearls only at the neck and breast, glistened in the bright sun, and her fair hair took on a burnished radiance. As Angèle passed with her in the gorgeous procession, she could not but view the scene with admiring eye, albeit her own sweet, sober attire—a pearly gray—seemed little in keeping; for the ladies and lords were most richly attired, and the damask and satin cloaks, crimson velvet gowns, silk hoods, and jewelled swords and daggers made a brave show. She was like some moth in a whorl of butterflies.

Her face was pale, and her eyes had a curious, disturbed look, as though they had seen frightening things. The events of last evening had tried her simple spirit, and she shrank from this glittering show; but the knowledge that her lover's life was in danger, and that her happiness was here and now at stake, held her bravely to her place, beset as it was with peril; for the Queen, with that eccentricity which had lifted her up yester-

day, might cast her down to-day, and she had good reason to fear the power and influence of Leicester, who she knew with a sure instinct was intent on Michel's ruin. Behind all her nervous shrinking and her heart's doubt, the memory of the face of the stranger she had seen last night with Sir Andrew Melvill tortured her. She could not find the time and place where she had seen the eyes that, in the palace, had filled her with mislike and abhorrence as they looked upon the Queen. Again and again in her fitful sleep had she dreamed of him, and a sense of foreboding was heavy upon her—she seemed to hear the footfall of coming disaster. The anxiety of her soul lent an unnatural brightness to her eyes; so that more than one enamoured courtier made essay to engage her in conversation, and paid her deferential compliment when the Queen's eyes were not turned her way. Come to the dais, she was placed not far from her Majesty, beside the Duke's Daughter, whose whimsical nature found frequent expression in what the Queen was wont to call "a merry

volt." She seemed a privileged person, with whom none ventured to take liberties, and against whom none was entitled to bear offence, for her quips were free from malice and her ingenuity in humor of mark. She it was who had put into the Queen's head that morning an idea which was presently to startle Angèle and all others.

Leicester was riding with the Knights-Tilters, and as they cantered lightly past the dais, trailing their spears in obeisance, Elizabeth engaged herself in talk with Cecil, who was standing near, and appeared not to see the favorite. This was the first time since he had mounted to good fortune that she had not thrown him a favor to pick up with his spear and wear in her honor, and he could scarce believe that she had meant to neglect him. He half halted, but she only deigned an inclination of the head, and he spurred his horse angrily on with a muttered imprecation, yet, to all seeming, gallantly paying homage.

"There shall be doings ere this day is done. 'Beware the Gypsy!'" said the Duke's

Daughter, in a low tone, to Angèle, and she laughed lightly.

"Who is the Gypsy?" asked Angèle, with good suspicion, however.

"Who but Leicester," answered the other. "Is he not black enough?"

"Why was he so called? Who put the name upon him?"

"Who but the Earl of Sussex, as he died —as noble a chief, as true a counsellor as ever spoke truth to a queen. But truth is not all at court, and Sussex was no flatterer. Leicester bowed under the storm for a moment when Sussex showed him in his true colors; but Sussex had no gift of intrigue, the tide turned, and so he broke his heart and died. But he left a message which I sometimes remember with my collects. 'I am now passing to another world,' said he, 'and must leave you to your fortunes and to the Queen's grace and goodness; but beware the Gypsy, for he will be too hard for all of you; you know not the beast so well as I do.' But my Lord Sussex was wrong. One there is who knows him through and

through, and hath little joy in the knowing."

The look in the eyes of the Duke's Daughter became like steel and her voice hardened, and Angèle realized that Leicester had in this beautiful and delicate maid-of-honor as bitter an enemy as ever brought down the mighty from their seats; that a pride had been sometime wounded, suffered an unwarrantable affront, which only innocence could feel so acutely. Her heart went out to the Duke's Daughter as it had never gone out to any of her sex since her mother's death, and she showed her admiration in her glance. The other saw it and smiled, slipping a hand in hers for a moment; and then a look, half-debating, half-triumphant, came into her face as her eyes followed Leicester down the green stretches of the tilting-yard.

The trumpet sounded, the people broke out in shouts of delight, the tilting began. For an hour the handsome joust went on, the Earl of Oxford, Charles Howard, Sir Henry Lee, Sir Christopher Hatton, and Leicester challenging, and so even was the combat that

victory seemed to settle in the plumes of neither, though Leicester of them all showed not the greatest skill, while in some regards greatest grace and deportment. Suddenly there rode into the lists, whence no one seemed to know, so intent had the public gaze been fixed, so quickly had he come, a mounted figure all in white, and at the moment when Sir Henry Lee had cried aloud his challenge for the last time. Silence fell as the bright figure cantered down the list, lifted the gauge, and sat still upon his black steed. Consternation fell. None among the people or the Knights-Tilters knew who the invader was, and Leicester called upon the masters of the ceremonies to demand his name and quality. The white horseman made no reply, but sat unmoved, while noise and turmoil suddenly sprang up around him.

Presently the voice of the Queen was heard clearly ringing through the lists. "His quality hath evidence. Set on."

The Duke's Daughter laughed, and whispered mischievously in Angèle's ear.

The gentlemen of England fared ill that day in the sight of all the people, for the challenger of the Knights-Tilters was more than a match for each that came upon him. He rode like a wild horseman of Yucatan. Wary, resourceful, sudden in device and powerful in onset, he bore all down, until the Queen cried: "There hath not been such skill in England since my father rode these lists. Three of my best gentlemen down, and it hath been but breathing to him. Now, Sir Harry Lee, it is thy turn," she laughed, as she saw the champion ride forward; "and next 'tis thine, Leicester. Ah, Leicester, would have at him now?" she added, sharply, as she saw the favorite spur forward before the gallant Lee. "He is full of choler—it becomes him, but it shall not be; bravery is not all. And if he failed"—she smiled acidly—"he would get him home to Kenilworth and show himself no more—if he failed, and the white knight failed not! What think you, dove?" she cried to the Duke's Daughter. "Would he not fall in the megrims for that England's honor had been

overthrown? Leicester could not live if England's honor should be toppled down like my dear Chris Hatton and his gallants, yonder."

The Duke's Daughter courtesied. "Methinks England's honor is in little peril—your Majesty knows well how to 'fend it. No subject keeps it."

"If I must 'fend it, dove, then Leicester there must not fight to-day. It shall surely be Sir Harry Lee. My Lord Leicester must have the place of honor at the last," she called aloud. Leicester swung his horse round, and galloped to the Queen.

"Your Majesty," he cried, in suppressed anger, "must I give place?"

"When all have failed and Leicester has won, then all yield place to Leicester," said the Queen, dryly.

The look on his face was not good to see, but he saluted gravely and rode away to watch the encounter between the most gallant Knight-Tilter in England and the stranger. Rage was in his heart, and it blinded him to the certainty of his defeat, for he was

not expert in the lists. But by a sure instinct he had guessed the identity of the white horseman, and every nerve quivered with desire to meet him in combat. Last night's good work seemed to have gone for naught. Elizabeth's humor had changed; and to-day she seemed set on humiliating him before the nobles who hated him, before the people who had found in him the cause why the Queen had not married, so giving no heir to the throne. Perturbed and charged with anger as he was, however, the combat now forward soon chained his attention. Not in many a year had there been seen in England such a display of skill and determination. The veteran Knight-Tilter, who knew that the result of this business meant more than life to him, and that more than the honor of his comrades was at stake—even the valor of England, which had been challenged—fought as he had never fought before, as no man had fought in England for many a year. At first the people cried aloud their encouragement; but as onset and attack after onset and attack showed that two

masters of their craft, two desperate men had met, and that the great sport had become a vital combat between their own champion and the champion of another land—Spain, France, Denmark, Russia, Italy?—a hush spread over the great space, and every eye was strained; men gazed with bated breath.

The green turf was torn and mangled, the horses reeked with sweat and foam, but overhead the soaring skylark sang, as it were, to express the joyance of the day. During many minutes the only sound that broke the stillness was the clash of armed men, the thud of hoofs, and the snorting and the wild breathing of the chargers. The lark's notes, however, ringing out over the lists, freed the tongue of the Queen's fool, who suddenly ran out into the lists, in his motley and cap and bells, and in his high, trilling voice sang a fool's song to the fighting twain:

"Who would lie down and close his eyes
While yet the lark sings o'er the dale?
Who would to Love make no replies,
Nor drink the nut-brown ale,
While throbs the pulse, and full's the purse
And all the world's for sale?"

Suddenly a cry of relief, of roaring excitement, burst from the people. Both horsemen and their chargers were on the ground. The fight was over, the fierce game at an end. That which all had feared, even the Queen herself, as the fight fared on, had not come to pass—England's champion had not been beaten by the armed mystery, though the odds had seemed against him.

"Though wintry blasts may prove unkind,
When winter's past we do forget;
Love's breast in summer-time is kind,
And all's well while life's with us yet—
Hey, ho, now the lark is mating,
Life's sweet wages are in waiting!"

Thus sang the fool as the two warriors were helped to their feet. Cumbered with their armor, and all dust-covered and blood-stained, though not seriously hurt, they were helped to their horses, and rode to the dais where the Queen sat.

"Ye have fought like men of old," she said, "and neither had advantage at the last. England's champion still may cry his challenge and not be forsworn, and he who

challenged goeth in honor again from the lists. You, sir, who have challenged, shall we not see your face or hear your voice? For what country, for what prince lifted you the gauge and challenged England's honor?"

"I crave your high Majesty's pardon"—Angèle's heart stood still. Her love had not pierced his disguise, though Leicester's hate had done so on the instant—"I crave your noble Majesty's grace," answered the stranger, "that I may still keep my face covered in humility. My voice speaks for no country and for no prince. I have fought for mine own honor, and to prove to England's Queen that she hath a champion who smiteth with strong arm, as on me and my steed this hath been seen to-day."

"Gallantly thought and well said," answered Elizabeth; "but England's champion and his strong arm have no victory. If gifts were given they must needs be cut in twain. But answer me, what is your country? I will not have it that any man pick up the gauge of England for his own honor. What is your country?"

"I am an exile, your high Majesty; and the only land for which I raise my sword this day is that land where I have found safety from my enemies."

The Queen turned and smiled at the Duke's Daughter. "I knew not where my own question might lead, but he hath turned it to full account," she said, under her breath. "His tongue is as ready as his spear. Then ye have both labored in England's honor, and I drink to you both," she added, and raised to her lips a glass of wine which a page presented. "I love ye both—in your high qualities," she hastened to add, with dry irony, and her eye rested mockingly on Leicester.

"My lords and gentlemen and all of my kingdom," she added, in a clear voice, insistent in its force, "ye have come upon May Day to take delight of England in my gardens, and ye are welcome. Ye have seen such a sight as doeth good to the eyes of brave men. It hath pleased me well, and I am constrained to say to you what, for divers great reasons, I have kept to my own coun-

sels, laboring for your good. The day hath come, however, the day and the hour, when ye shall know that wherein I propose to serve you as ye well deserve. It is my will—and now I see my way to its good fulfilment—that I remain no longer in that virgin state wherein I have ever lived."

Great cheering here broke in, and for a time she could get no further. Ever alive to the bent of the popular mind, she had chosen a perfect occasion to take them into her confidence—however little or much she would abide by her words, or intended the union of which she spoke. In the past she had counselled with her great advisers, with Cecil and the rest, and through them messages were borne to the people; but now she spoke direct to them all, and it had its immediate reward—the acclamations were as those with which she was greeted when she first passed through the streets of London on inheriting the crown.

Well pleased, she continued: "This I will do with expedition and weightiest judgment, for of little account though I am, he that sits

with the Queen of England in this realm, must needs be a prince indeed. . . . So be ye sure of this that ye shall have your heart-most wishes, and there shall be one to come after me who will wear this crown even as I have worn, in direct descent, my father's crown. Our dearest sister, the Queen of the Scots, hath been delivered of a fair son; and in high affection the news thereof she hath sent me, with a palfrey which I shall ride among you in token of the love I bear her Majesty. She hath in her time got an heir to the throne with which we are ever in kinship and alliance, and I in my time shall give ye your hearts' desire."

Angèle, who had, with palpitating heart and swimming head, seen Michel de la Forêt leave the lists and disappear among the trees, as mysteriously as he came, was scarce conscious of the cheers and riotous delight that followed Elizabeth's tactful if delusive speech to the people. A few whispered words from the Duke's Daughter had told her that Michel had obeyed the Queen's command in entering the lists and taking up the challenge;

and that she herself, carrying the royal message to him and making arrangements for his accoutrement and mounting, had urged him to obedience. She observed dryly that he had needed little pressure, and that his eyes had lighted at the prospect of the combat. Apart from his innate love of fighting, he had realized that in the moment of declining to enter the Queen's service he had been at a disadvantage, and that his courage was open to attack by the incredulous or malicious. This would have mattered little were it not that he had been given unusual importance as a prisoner by the Queen's personal notice of himself. He had, therefore, sprung to the acceptance, and sent his humble duty to the Queen by her winsome messenger, who, with conspicuous dramatic skill, had arranged secretly, with the help of a Gentleman Pensioner and the Master of the Horse, his appearance and his exit. That all succeeded as she had planned quickened her pulses, and made her heart still warmer to Angèle, who, now that all was over, and her Huguenot lover had gone

his mysterious way, seemed lost in a troubled reverie.

It was a troubled reverie, indeed, for Angèle's eyes were on the stranger who was present with Sir Andrew Melvill the night before. Her gaze upon him now became fixed and insistent, for the sense of foreboding so heavy on her deepened to a torturing suspense. Where had she seen this man before? To what day or hour in her past did he belong? What was there in his smooth, smiling, malicious face that made her blood run cold? As she watched him, he turned his head. She followed his eyes. The horse which Mary Queen of Scots had sent with the message of the birth of her son was being led to the Queen by the dark-browed, pale-faced churl who had brought it from Scotland. She saw a sharp, dark look pass between the two.

Suddenly her sight swam, she swayed and would have fainted, but resolution steadied her, and a low exclamation broke from her lips. Now she knew!

The face that had eluded her was at last

in the grasp of horrified memory. It was the face of one who many years ago was known to have poisoned the Duc de Chambly by anointing the pommel of his saddle with a delicate poison which the rider would touch, and touching would, perhaps, carry to his nostrils or mouth as he rode, and die upon the instant. She herself had seen the Duc de Chambly fall; had seen this man fly from Paris for his life; and had thereafter known of his return to favor at the court of Mary and Francis, for nothing could be proved against him. The memory flashed like lightning through her brain. She moved swiftly forward despite the detaining hand of the Duke's Daughter. The Queen was already mounted, her hand already upon the pommel of the saddle.

Elizabeth noted the look of anguished anxiety in Angèle's eyes, her face like that of one who had seen souls in purgatory; and some swift instinct, born of years upon years of peril in old days when her life was no boon to her enemies, made her lean towards the girl, whose quick whispered words were

to her as loud as thunder. She was, however, composed and still. Not a tremor passed through her.

"Your wish is granted, mistress," she said aloud, then addressed a word to Cecil at her side, who passed on her command. Presently she turned slowly to the spot where Sir Andrew Melvill and the other sat upon their horses. She scanned complacently the faces of both, then her eyes settled steadily on the face of the murderer. Still gazing intently, she drew the back of her gloved fingers along the pommel. The man saw the motion, unnoted and unsignificant to any other save Angèle, meaningless even to Melvill, the innocent and honest gentleman at his side; and he realized that the Queen had had a warning. Noting the slight stir among the gentlemen round him, he knew that his game was foiled, that there was no escape. He was not prepared for what followed.

In a voice to be heard only at small distance, the Queen said, calmly:

"This palfrey sent me by my dear sister of Scotland shall bear me among you, friends;

and in days to come *I will remember how she hath given new life to me by her loving message.* Sir Andrew Melvill, I shall have further speech with you; and you, sir"— speaking to the sinister figure by his side—"come hither."

The man dismounted, and with unsteady step came forward. Elizabeth held out her gloved hand for him to kiss. His face turned white. It was come soon, his punishment. None knew save Angèle and the Queen the doom that was upon him, if Angèle's warning was well founded. He knelt, and bent his head over her hand.

"Salute sir," she said, in a low voice.

He touched his lips to her fingers. She pressed them swiftly against his mouth. An instant, then he rose and stepped backward to his horse. Tremblingly, blindly, he mounted.

A moment passed, then Elizabeth rode on with her ladies behind her, her gentlemen beside her. As she passed slowly, the would-be regicide swayed and fell from his horse, and stirred no more.

Elizabeth rode on, her hand upon the pommel of the saddle. So she rode for a full half-hour, and came back to her palace. But she raised not her gloved right hand above the pommel, and she dismounted with exceeding care.

That night the man who cared for the horse died secretly, as had done his master, with the Queen's glove pressed to his nostrils by one whom Cecil could trust. And the matter was hidden from the court and the people; for it was given out that Melvill's friend had died of some heart trouble.

XV

IT seemed an unspeakable smallness in a man of such high place in the state, whose hand had tied and untied myriad knots of political and court intrigue, that he should stoop to a game which any pettifogging hanger-on might play—and reap scorn in the playing. By insidious arts, Leicester had in his day turned the Queen's mind to his own will; had foiled the diplomacy of the Spaniard, the German, and the Gaul; had by subterranean means checkmated the designs of the Medici; had traced his way through plot and counter-plot, hated by most, loved by none save, maybe, his royal mistress, to whom he was now more a custom than a beloved friend. Year upon year he had built up his influence. None

had championed him save himself, and even from the consequences of rashness and folly he had risen to a still higher place in the kingdom. But such as Leicester are ever at last a sacrifice to the laborious means by which they achieve their greatest ends—means contemptible and small.

To the great intriguers every little detail, every commonplace insignificance is used—and must be used by them alone—to further their dark causes. They cannot trust their projects to brave lieutenants, to faithful subordinates. They cannot say, "Here is the end; this is the work to be done; upon your shoulders be the burden!" They must "stoop to conquer." Every miserable detail becomes of moment, until by-and-by the art of intrigue and conspiracy begins to lose proportion in their minds. The detail has ever been so important, conspiracy so much second nature, that they must needs be intriguing and conspiring when the occasion is trifling and the end negligible.

To all intriguers life has lost romance; there is no poem left in nature; no ideal, per-

sonal, public, or national, detains them in its wholesome influence; no great purpose allures them; they have no causes for which to die—save themselves. They are so honeycombed with insincerity and the vice of thought that by-and-by all colors are as one, all pathways the same; because, whichever hue of light breaks upon their world they see it through the gray-cloaked mist of falsehood; and whether the path be good or bad they would still walk in it crookedly. How many men and women Leicester had tracked or lured to their doom; over how many men and women he had stepped to his place of power, history speaks not carefully; but the traces of his deeds run through a thousand archives, and they suggest plentiful sacrifices to a subverted character.

Favorite of a queen, he must now stoop to set a trap for the ruin of as simple a soul as ever stepped upon the soil of England; and his dark purposes had not even the excuse of necessity on the one hand, of love or passion on the other. An insane jealousy of the place the girl had won in the considera-

tion of the Queen, of her lover who, he thought, had won a still higher place in the same influence, was his only motive for action at first. His cruelty was not redeemed even by the sensuous interest the girl might arouse in a reckless nature by her beauty and her charm.

So the great Leicester—the Gypsy, as the dead Sussex had called him—lay in wait in Greenwich Park for Angèle to pass, like some orchard-thief in the blossoming trees. Knowing the path by which she would come to her father's cottage from the pālace, he had placed himself accordingly. He had thought he might have to wait long or come often for the perfect opportunity; but it seemed as if fate played his game for him, and that once again the fruit he would pluck should fall into his palm. Bright-eyed, and elated from a long talk with the Duke's Daughter, who had given her a message from the Queen, Angèle had abstractedly taken the wrong path in the wood. Leicester saw that it would lead her into the maze some distance off. Making a détour, he met her at the

moment she discovered her mistake. The light from the royal word her friend had brought was still in her face; but it was crossed by perplexity now.

He stood still, as though astonished at seeing her, a smile upon his face. So perfectly did he play his part that she thought the meeting accidental; and though in her heart she had a fear of the man, and knew how bitter an enemy he was of Michel's, his urbane power, his skilful diplomacy of courtesy had its way. These complicated lives, instinct with contradiction, have the interest of forbidden knowledge. The dark experiences of life leave their mark, and give such natures that touch of mystery which allures even those who have high instincts and true feelings, as one peeps over a hidden depth and wonders what lies beyond the dark. So Angèle, suddenly arrested, was caught by the sense of mystery in the man, by the fascination of *finesse*, of dark power; and it was womanlike that all on an instant she should dream of the soul of goodness in things evil.

Thus in life we are often surprised out of long years of prejudice, and even of dislike and suspicion, by some fortuitous incident, which might have chanced to two who had every impulse towards each other, not such antagonisms as lay between Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and this Huguenot refugee. She had every cue to hate him. Each moment of her life in England had been beset with peril because of him—peril to the man she loved, therefore peril to herself. And yet, so various is the nature of woman that, while steering straitly by one star, she levies upon the light of other stars. Faithful and sincere, yet loving power, curious and adventurous, she must needs, without intention, without purpose, stray into perilous paths.

As Leicester stepped suddenly into Angèle's gaze, she was only, as it were, conscious of a presence in itself alluring by virtue of the history surrounding it. She was surprised out of an instinctive dislike, and the cue she had to loathe him was for the moment lost.

Unconsciously, unintentionally, she smiled at him now, then, realizing, retreated, shrinking from him, her face averted. Man or woman had found in Leicester the delicate and intrepid gamester, exquisite in the choice of detail, masterful in the breadth of method. And now, as though his whole future depended on this interview, he brought to bear a life-long skill to influence her. He had determined to set the Queen against her. He did not know—not even he—that she had saved the Queen's life on that auspicious May Day when Harry Lee had fought the white knight, Michel de la Forêt, and halved the honors of the lists with him. If he had but known that the Queen had hid from him this fact—this vital thing touching herself and England—he would have viewed his future with a vaster distrust. But there could be no surer sign of Elizabeth's growing coldness and intended breach than that she had hid from him the dreadful incident of the poisoned glove and the swift execution of the would-be murderer, and had made Cecil her only confidant. But he did

know that Elizabeth herself had commanded Michel de la Forêt to the lists; and his mad jealousy impelled him to resort to a satanic cunning towards these two fugitives, who seemed to have mounted within a few short days as far as had he in thrice as many years to a high place in the regard of the Majesty of England.

To disgrace them both, to sow distrust of the girl in the Queen's mind; to make her seem the opposite of what she was; to drop in her own mind suspicion of her lover; to drive her to some rash act, some challenge of the Queen herself—that was his plan. He knew how little Elizabeth's imperious spirit would brook any challenge from this fearless girl concerning De la Forêt. But to convince her that the Queen favored Michel in some shadowed sense, that De la Forêt was privy to a dark compact—so deep a plot was all worthy of a larger end. He had well inspired the court of France through its ambassador to urge the Medici to press actively and bitterly for De la Forêt's return to France, and to the beheading sword that waited for

him; and his task had been made light by international difficulties, which made the heart of Elizabeth's foreign policy friendship with France and an alliance against Philip of Spain. She had, therefore, opened up, even in the past few days, negotiations once again for the long-talked-of marriage with the Duke of Anjou, the brother of the King, son of the Medici. State policy was involved, and, if De la Forêt might be a counter, the pledge of exchange in the game, as it were, the path would once more be clear.

He well believed that Elizabeth's notice of De la Forêt was but a fancy that would pass, as a hundred times before such fancies had come and gone; but against that brighter prospect there lay the fact that never before had she shown himself such indifference. In the past she had raged against him, she had imprisoned him, she had driven him from her presence in her anger, but always her paroxysms of rage had been succeeded by paroxysms of tenderness. Now he saw a colder light in the sky, a grayer horizon met

his eye. So at every corner of the compass he played for the breaking of the spell.

Yet as he now bowed low before Angèle there seemed to show in his face a very candor of surprise, of pleasure, joined to a something friendly and protective in his glance and manner. His voice insinuated that by-gones should be by-gones; it suggested that she had misunderstood him. It pleaded against the injustice of her prejudice.

"So far from home!" he said, with a smile.

"More miles from home," she replied, thinking of never-returning days in France, "than I shall ever count again."

"But no, methinks the palace is within a whisper," he responded.

"Lord Leicester knows well I am a prisoner, that I no longer abide in the palace," she answered.

He laughed lightly. "An imprisonment in a Queen's friendship. I bethink me, it is three hours since I saw you go to the palace. It is a few worthless seconds since you have got your freedom."

She nettled at his tone. "Lord Leicester

takes great interest in my unimportant goings and comings. I cannot think it is because I go and come."

He chose to misunderstand her meaning. Drawing closer, he bent over her shoulder. "Since your arrival here my only diary is the tally of your coming and going." Suddenly, as though by an impulse of great frankness, he added, in a low tone:

"And is it strange that I should follow you — that I should worship grace and virtue? Men call me this and that. You have no doubt been filled with dark tales of my misdeeds. Has there been one in the court, even one, who, living by my bounty or my patronage, has said one good word of me? And why? For long years the Queen, who, maybe, might have been better counselled, chose me for her friend, adviser—because I was true to her. I have lived for the Queen, and living for her have lived for England. Could I keep—I ask you, could I keep myself blameless in the midst of flattery, intrigue, and conspiracy? I admit that I have played with fiery weapons in my day,

and must needs still do so. The incorruptible cannot exist in the corrupted air of this court. You have come here with the light of innocence and truth about you. At first I could scarce believe that such goodness lived, hardly understood it. The light half-blinded and embarrassed; but at last I saw! You of all this court have made me see what sort of life I might have lived. You have made me dream the dreams of youth and high, unsullied purpose once again. Was it strange that in the dark pathways of the court I watched your footsteps come and go, carrying radiance with you? No—Leicester has learned how sombre, sinister, has been his past, by a presence which is the soul of beauty, of virtue, and of happy truth. Lady, my heart is yours. I worship you."

Overborne for the moment by the eager, searching eloquence of his words, she had listened bewildered to him. Now she turned upon him with panting breath, and said:

"My lord, my lord, I will hear no more. You know I love Monsieur de la Forêt, for

whose sake I am here in England—for whose sake I still remain."

"'Tis a labor of love but ill requited," he answered, with suggestion in his tone.

"What mean you, my lord?" she asked, sharply, a kind of blind agony in her voice; for she felt his meaning, and though she did not believe him, and knew in her soul he slandered, there was a sting, for slander ever scorches where it touches.

"Can you not see?" he said. "May Day —why did the Queen command him to the lists? Why does she keep him here—in the palace? Why, against the will of France, her ally, does she refuse to send him forth? Why, unheeding the laughter of the court, does she favor this unimportant stranger, brave though he be? Why should she smile upon him? . . . Can you not see, sweet lady?"

"You know well why the Queen detains him here," she answered, calmly now. "In the Queen's understanding with France, exiles who preach the faith are free from extradition. You heard what the Queen required of him—that on Trinity Day he

should preach before her, and upon this preaching should depend his safety."

"Indeed, so her Majesty said with great humor," replied Leicester. "So, indeed, she said; but when we hide our faces a thin veil suffices. The man is a soldier—a soldier born. Why should he turn priest now? I pray you, think again. He was quick of wit; the Queen's meaning was clear to him; he rose with seeming innocence to the fly, and she landed him at the first toss. But what is forward bodes no good to you, dear star of heaven. I have known the Queen for half a lifetime. She has wild whims and dangerous fancies, fills her hours of leisure with experiences—an artist is the Queen. She means no good to you."

She had made as if to leave him, though her eyes searched in vain for the path which she should take; but she now broke in, impatiently:

"Poor, unnoted though I am, the Queen of England is my friend," she answered. "What evil could she wish me? From me she has naught to fear. I am not an atom in

her world. Did she but lift her finger I am done. But she knows that, humble though I be, I would serve her to my last breath; because I know, my Lord Leicester, how many there are who serve her foully, faithlessly, and there should be those by her who would serve her singly."

His eyes half closed, he beat his toe upon the ground. He frowned, as though he had no wish to hurt her by words which he yet must speak. With calculated thought he faltered.

"Yet do you not think it strange," he said, at last, "that Monsieur de la Forêt should be within the palace ever, and that you should be banished from the palace? Have you never seen the fly and the spider in the web? Do you not know that they who have the power to bless or ban, to give joy or withhold it, appear to give when they mean to withhold? God bless us all—how has your innocence involved your judgment!"

She suddenly flushed to the eyes. "I have wit enough," she said, acidly, "to feel

that truth which life's experience may not have taught me. It is neither age nor evil that teaches one to judge 'twixt black and white. God gives the true divination to human hearts that need."

It was a contest in which Leicester revelled — simplicity and single-mindedness against the multifarious and double-tongued. He had made many efforts in his time to conquer argument and prejudice. When he chose, none could be more insinuating or turn the flank of a proper argument by adroit suggestion. He used his power now.

"You think she means well by you? You think that she, who has a thousand ladies of a kingdom at her call, of the best and most beautiful — and even," his voice softened, "though you are more beautiful than all, that beauty would soften her towards you? When was it Elizabeth loved beauty? When was it that her heart warmed towards those who would love or wed? Did she not imprison me, even in these palace grounds, for one whole year because I sought to marry? Has she not a hundred times sent from her

presence women with faces like flowers because they were in contrast to her own? Do you see love blossoming at this court? God's Son! but she would keep us all like babes in Eden an she could, unmated and unloved."

He drew quickly to her and leaned over her, whispering down her shoulder. "Do you think there is any reason why all at once she should change her mind and cherish lovers?"

She looked up at him fearlessly and firmly.

"In truth, I do. My Lord Leicester, you have lived in the circle of her good pleasure, near to her noble Majesty, as you say, for half a lifetime. Have you not found a reason why now or any time she should cherish love and lovers? Ah, no; you have seen her face, you have heard her voice, but you have not known her heart!"

"Ah, opportunity lacked," he said, in irony and with a reminiscent smile. "I have been busy with state affairs, I have not sat on cushions, listening to royal fingers on the virginals. Still, I ask you, do you think

there is a reason why from her height she should stoop down to rescue you or give you any joy? Wherefore should the Queen do aught to serve you? Wherefore should she save your lover?"

It was on Angèle's lips to answer, "Because I saved her life on May Day." It was on her lips to tell of the poisoned glove, but she only smiled, and said:

"But, yes, I think, my lord, there is a reason, and in that reason I have faith."

Leicester saw how firmly she was fixed in her idea, how rooted was her trust in the Queen's intentions towards her; and he guessed there was something hidden which gave her such supreme confidence.

"If she means to save him, why does she not save him now? Why not end the business in a day—not stretch it over these long midsummer weeks?"

"I do not think it strange," she answered. "He is a political prisoner. Messages must come and go between England and France. Besides, who calleth for haste? Is it I who have most at stake? It is not the first time

I have been at court, my lord. In these high places things are orderly "—a touch of sarcasm came into her tone—"life is not a mighty rushing wind save to those whom vexing passion drives to hasty deeds."

She made to move on once more, but paused, still not certain of her way.

"Permit me to show you," he said, with a laugh and a gesture towards a path. "Not that—this is the shorter. I will take you to a turning which leads straight to your durance—and another which leads elsewhere!"

She could not say no, because she had, in very truth, lost her way, and she might wander far and be in danger. Also, she had no fear of him. Steeled to danger in the past, she was not timid; but, more than all, the game of words between them had had its fascination. The man himself, by virtue of what he was, had his fascination also. The thing inherent in all her sex, to peep over the hedge, to skirt dangerous fires lightly, to feel the warmth distantly and not be scorched—that was in her, too, and she lived according to her race and the long predis-

position of the ages. Most women like her —as good as she—have peeped and stretched out hands to the alluring fire and come safely through, wiser and no better. But many, too, bewildered and confused by what they see—as light from a mirror flashed into the eye half blinds—have peeped over the hedge and, miscalculating their power of self-control, have entered in, and returned no more into the quiet garden of unstraying love.

Leicester quickly put on an air of gravity. "I warn you that danger lies before you. If you cross the Queen—and you will cross the Queen when you know the truth, as I know it—you will pay a heavy price for refusing Leicester as your friend."

She made a protesting motion and seemed about to speak, but suddenly, with a passionate gesture, Leicester added: "Let them go their way. Monsieur de la Forêt will be tossed aside before another winter comes. Do you think he can abide here in the midst of plot and intrigue and hated by the people of the court? He is doomed. But more,

he is unworthy of you; while I can serve you well, and I can love you well." She shrank away from him. "No, do not turn from me, for, in very truth, Leicester's heart has been pierced by the inevitable arrow. You think I mean you evil?"

He paused as though uncertain how to proceed, then with a sudden impulse continued: "No! no! And if there be a saving grace in marriage, marriage it shall be, if you will but hear me. You shall be my wife—Leicester's wife. As I have mounted to power, so I will hold power with you—with you, the brightest spirit that ever England saw. Worthy of a kingdom with you beside me, I shall win to greater, happier days; and at Kenilworth, where kings and queens have lodged, you shall be ruler. We will leave this court until Elizabeth, betrayed by those who know not how to serve her, shall send for me again. Here—the power behind the throne—you and I will sway this realm through the aging, sentimental Queen. Listen, and look at me in the eyes—I speak the truth, you read my heart. You think I

hated you and hated De la Forêt. By all the gods! it's true I hated him, because I saw that he would come between me and the Queen. A man must have one great passion. Life itself must be a passion. Power was my passion—power, not the Queen. You have broken all that down. I yield it all to you—for your sake and my own. I would steal from life yet before my sun goes to its setting a few years of truth and honesty and clear design. At heart I am a patriot—a loyal Englishman. Your cause—the cause of Protestantism—did I not fight for it at Rochelle? Have I not ever urged the Queen to spend her revenue for your cause, to send her captains and her men to fight for it?"

She raised her head in interest, and her lips murmured, "Ah, yes, I know you did that."

He saw his advantage and pursued it. "See, I will be honest with you—honest at last, as I have wished in vain to be, for honesty was misunderstood. It is not so with you—you understand. Ah, light of woman-

hood, I speak the truth now. I have been evil in my day—I admit it—evil because I was in the midst of evil. I betrayed because I was betrayed; I slew else I should have been slain. We have had dark days in England, privy conspiracy and rebellion; and I have had to thread my way through dreadful courses by a thousand blind paths. Would it be no joy to you if I, through your influence, recast my life—remade my policy, renewed my youth—pursuing principle where I have pursued opportunity? Angèle, come to Kenilworth with me. Leave De la Forêt to his fate. The way to happiness is with me. Will you come?"

He had made his great effort. As he spoke he almost himself believed that he told the truth. Under the spell of his own emotional power it seemed as though he meant to marry her, as though he could find happiness in the union. He had almost persuaded himself to be what he would have her to believe he might be.

Under the warmth and convincing force of his words her pulses had beat faster, her

heart had throbbed in her throat, her eyes had glistened; but not with that light which they had shed for Michel de la Forêt. How different was this man's wooing—its impetuous, audacious, tender violence, with that quiet, powerful, almost sacred gravity of her Camisard lover! It is this difference —the weighty, emotional difference—between a desperate passion and a pure love which has ever been so powerful in twisting the destinies of a moiety of the world to misery, who otherwise would have stayed contented, inconspicuous, and good. Angèle would have been more than human if she had not felt the spell of the ablest intriguer, of the most fascinating diplomatist of his day.

Before he spoke of marriage the thrill—the unconvincing thrill though it was—of a perilous temptation was upon her; but the very thing most meant to move her only made her shudder; for in her heart of hearts she knew that he was ineradicably false. To be married to one constitutionally untrue would be more terrible a fate for her than to be linked to him in a lighter, more dissoluble

bond. So do the greatest tricksters of this world overdo their part, so play the wrong card when every past experience suggests it is the card to play. He knew by the silence that followed his words, and the slow, steady look she gave him, that she was not won nor on the way to the winning.

"My lord," she said, at last, and with a courage which steadied her affrighted and perturbed innocence, "you are eloquent, you are fruitful of flattery, of those things which have, I doubt not, served you well in your day. But, if you see your way to a better life, it were well you should choose one of nobler mould than I. I am not made for sacrifice, to play the missioner and snatch brands from the burning. I have enough to do to keep my own feet in the ribbon-path of right. You must look elsewhere for that guardian influence which is to make of you a paragon."

"No, no," he answered, sharply, "you think the game not worth the candle—you doubt me and what I can do for you; my sincerity, my power you doubt."

"Indeed, yes, I doubt both," she answered, gravely, "for you would have me believe that I have power to lead you. With how small a mind you credit me! You think, too, that you sway this kingdom; but I know that you stand upon a cliff's edge, and that the earth is fraying 'neath your tread. You dare to think that you have power to drag down with you the man who honors me with—"

"With his love, you'd say. Yet he will leave you fretting out your soul until the sharp-edged truth cuts your heart in twain. Have you no pride? I care not what you say of me—say your worst, and I will not resent it, for I will still prove that your way lies with me."

She gave a bitter sigh, and touched her forehead with trembling fingers. "If words could prove it, I had been convinced but now, for they are well devised, and they have music, too; but such a music, my lord, as would drown the truth in the soul of a woman. Your words allure, but you have learned the art of words. You yourself — oh,

my lord, you who have tasted all the pleasures of this world, could you then have the heart to steal from one who has so little that little which gives her happiness?"

"You know not what can make you happy—I can teach you that. By God's Son! but you have wit and intellect and are a match for a prince, not for a cast-off Camisard. I shall ere long be lord-lieutenant of these isles — of England and Ireland. Come to my nest. We will fly far! Ah, your eye brightens, your heart leaps to mine —I feel it now, I—"

"Oh, have done, have done," she passionately broke in. "I would rather die, be torn upon the rack, burned at the stake, than put my hand in yours. And you do not wish it —you speak but to destroy, not to cherish. While you speak to me I see all those"—she made a gesture as though to put something from her—"all those to whom you have spoken as you have done to me. I hear the myriad falsehoods you have told—onewhelming confusion. I feel the blindness which has crept upon them—those poor women—

as you have sown the air with the dust of the passion which you call love. Oh, you never knew what love meant, my lord. I doubt if when you lay in your mother's arms you turned to her with love. You never did one kindly act for love; no generous thought was ever born in you by love. Sir, I know it as though it were written in a book: your life has been one long calculation —your sympathy or kindness a calculated thing. Good-nature, emotion you may have had, but never the divine thing by which the world is saved. Were there but one little place where that Eden flower might bloom within your heart, you could not seek to ruin that love which lives in mine and fills it, conquering all the lesser part of me. I never knew of how much love I was capable until I heard you speak to-day. Out of your life's experience, out of all that you have learned of women, good and evil, you—for a selfish, miserable purpose—would put the gyves upon my wrists, make me a pawn in your dark game—a pawn which you would lose without a thought as the game went on.

"If you must fight, my lord, if you must ruin Monsieur de la Forêt and a poor Huguenot girl, do it by greater means than this. You have power, you say. Use it then; destroy us, if you will. Send us to the Medici: bring us to the block, murder us—that were no new thing to Lord Leicester. But do not stoop to treachery and falsehood to thrust us down. Oh, you have made me see the depths of shame to-day! But yet"—her voice suddenly changed, a note of plaintive force filled it—"I have learned much this hour—more than I ever knew. Perhaps it is that we come to knowledge only through fire and tears." She smiled sadly. "I suppose that sometimes, some day, this page of life would have scorched my sight. Oh, my lord, what was there in me that you dared speak so to me? Was there naught to have stayed your tongue and stemmed the tide in which you would engulf me?"

He had listened as in a dream at first. She had read him as he might read himself, had revealed him with the certain truth, as none other had done in all his days. He

was silent for a long moment, then raised his hand in protest.

"You have a strange idea of what makes offence and shame. I offered you marriage," he said, complacently. "And when I come to think upon it, after all that you have said, fair Huguenot, I see no cause for railing. You call me this and that; to you I am a liar, a rogue, a cut-throat, what you will; and yet, and yet, I will have my way—I will have my way in the end."

"You offered me marriage—and meant it not. Do I not know? Did you rely so little on your compelling powers, my lord, that you must needs resort to that bait? Do you think that you will have your way to-morrow if you have failed to-day?"

With a quick change of tone and a cold, scornful laugh he rejoined, "Do you intend to measure swords with me?"

"Oh no, my lord," she answered, quietly, "what should one poor, unfriended girl do in contest with the Earl of Leicester? But yet, in very truth, I have friends, and in my hour of greatest need I shall go seeking."

She was thinking of the Queen. He guessed her thought.

"You will not be so mad," he said, urbanely, again. "Of what can you complain to the Queen? Tut! tut! you must seek other friends than the Majesty of England."

"Then, my lord, I will," she answered, bravely. "I will seek the help of such a Friend as fails not when all fails, even He who putteth down the mighty from their seats and exalteth the humble."

"Ah, well, if I have not touched your heart," he answered, gallantly, "I at least have touched your wit and intellect. Once more I offer you alliance. Think well before you decline."

He had no thought that he would succeed, but it was ever his way to return to the charge. It had been the secret of his life's success so far. He had never taken a refusal. He had never believed that when man or woman said no that no was meant; and if it were meant he still believed that constant dropping would wear away the stone. He

still held that persistence was the greatest lever in the world, that unswerving persistence was the master of opportunity.

They had now come to two paths in the park leading different ways.

"This road leads to Kenilworth, this to your prison," he said, with a slow gesture, his eyes fixed upon hers.

"I will go to my prison, then," she said, stepping forward, "and alone, by your leave."

Leicester was a good sportsman. Though he had been beaten all along the line, he hid his deep chagrin, choked down the rage that was in him. Smiling, he bowed low.

"I will do myself the honor to visit your prison to-morrow," he said.

"My father will welcome you, my lord," she answered, and, gathering up her skirt, ran down the pathway.

He stood, unmoving, and watched her disappear.

"But I shall have my way with them both," he said, aloud.

The voice of a singer sounded in the green-

wood. Half consciously Leicester listened. The words came shrilling through the trees:

> "Oh, love, it is a lily flower,
> (*Sing, my captain, sing, my lady!*)
> The sword shall cleave it, Life shall leave it—
> Who shall know the hour?
> (*Sing, my lady, still!*)."

Presently the jingling of bells mingled with the song, then a figure in motley burst upon him. It was the Queen's fool.

"Brother, well met—most happily met!" he cried.

"And why well met, fool?" asked Leicester.

"Prithee, my work grows heavy, brother. I seek another fool for the yoke. Here are my bells for you. I will keep my cap. And so we will work together, fool: you for the morning, I for the afternoon, and the devil take the night-time! So God be with you, Obligato!"

With a laugh he leaped into the undergrowth and left Leicester standing with the bells in his hand.

XVI

NGÈLE had come to know, as others in like case have ever done, how wretched indeed is that poor man that hangs on princes' favors. She had saved the Queen's life upon May Day, and on the evening of that day the Queen had sent for her, had made such high and tender acknowledgment of her debt as would seem to justify for her perpetual honor. And what Elizabeth said she meant; but in a life set in forests of complications and opposing interests the political overlapped the personal in her nature. Thus it was that she had kept the princes of the world dangling, advancing towards marriage with them, retreating suddenly, setting off one house against the other, allying herself to one

European power to-day, with another to-morrow, her own person and her crown the pawn with which she played. It was not a beautiful thing in a woman, but it was what a woman could do; and, denied other powers given to men—as to her father—she resorted to astute but doubtful devices to advance her diplomacy. Over all was self-infatuation, the bane of princes, the curse of greatness, the source of wide injustice. It was not to be expected, as Leicester had said, that Elizabeth, save for the whim of the moment, would turn aside to confer benefit upon Angèle or to keep her in mind, unless constrained to do so for some political reason.

The girl had charmed the Queen, had, by saving her life, made England her long debtor; but Leicester had judged rightly in believing that the Queen might find the debt irksome; that her gratitude would be corroded by other destructive emotions. It was true that Angèle had saved her life, but Michel had charmed her eye. He had proved himself a more gallant fighter than

any in her kingdom; and had done it, as he had said, in her honor. So, as her admiration for Michel grew, her debt to Angèle became burdensome; and, despite her will, there stole into her mind the old petulance and smothered anger against beauty and love and marriage. She could ill bear that one near her person should not be content to flourish in the light and warmth of her own favor, setting aside all other small affections. So it was that she had sent Angèle to her father and kept De la Forêt in the palace. Perplexed, troubled by new developments, the birth of a son to Mary Queen of Scots, the demand of her Parliament that she should marry, the pressure of foreign policy which compelled her to open up again negotiations for marriage with the Duke of Anjou—all these combined to detach her from the interest she had suddenly felt in Angèle. But, by instinct, she knew also that Leicester, through jealousy, had increased the complication; and, fretful under the long influence he had had upon her, she steadily lessened intercourse with him. The

duel he fought with Lemprière on May Day came to her ears through the Duke's Daughter, and she seized upon it with sharp petulance. First she ostentatiously gave housing and care to Lemprière, and went to visit him; then, having refused Leicester audience, wrote to him.

"What is this I hear," she scrawled upon the paper—"that you have forced a quarrel with the Lord of Rozel, and have well ny ta'en his life! Is swording, then, your dearest vice that you must urge it on a harmless gentleman, and my visitor? Do you think you hold a charter of freedom for your self-will? Have a care, Leicester, or, by God! you shall know another sword surer than your own."

The rage of Leicester on receiving this knew no bounds; for though he had received from Elizabeth stormy letters before, none had had in it the cold irony of this missive. The cause of it? Desperation seized him. With a mad disloyalty he read in every word of Elizabeth's letter, Michel de la Forêt, refugee. With madder fury he determined to

strike for the immediate ruin of De la Forêt, and Angèle with him—for had she not thrice repulsed him as though he had been some village captain? After the meeting in the maze he had kept his promise of visiting her "prison." By every art, and without avail, he had through patient days sought to gain an influence over her; for he saw that if he could but show the Queen that the girl was open to his advances, accepted his protection, her ruin would be certain—in anger Elizabeth would take revenge upon both refugees. But however much he succeeded with Monsieur Aubert, he failed wholly with Angèle. She repulsed him still with the most certain courtesy, with the greatest outward composure; but she had to make her fight alone, for the Queen forbade intercourse with Michel, and she must have despaired but for the messages sent now and then by the Duke's Daughter.

Through M. Aubert, to whom Leicester was diligently courteous, and whom he sought daily, discussing piously the question of religion so dear to the old man's heart, he strove

to foster in Angèle's mind the suspicion he had ventured at their meeting in the maze, that the Queen, through personal interest in Michel, was saving his life to keep him in her household. So well did he work on the old man's feelings that when he offered his own protection to M. Aubert and Angèle, whatever the issue with De la Forêt might be, he was met with an almost tearful response of gratitude. It was the moment to convey a deep distrust of De la Forêt into the mind of the old refugee, and it was subtly done.

Were it not better to leave the court, where only danger surrounded them, and find safety on Leicester's own estate, where no man living could molest them? Were it not well to leave Michel de la Forêt to his fate, whatever it would be? Thrice within a week the Queen had sent for De la Forêt—what reason was there for that, unless the Queen had a secret personal interest in him? Did M. Aubert think it was only a rare touch of humor which had turned De la Forêt into a preacher, and set his fate upon a sermon to be preached before the court? He himself

had long held high office, had been near to her Majesty, and he could speak with more knowledge than he might use—it grieved him that Mademoiselle Aubert should be placed in so painful a position.

Sometimes as the two talked Angèle would join them; and then there was a sudden silence, which made her flush with embarrassment, anxiety, or anger. In vain did she assume a cold composure, in vain school herself to treat Leicester with a precise courtesy; in vain her heart protested the goodness of De la Forêt and high uprightness of the Queen; the persistent suggestions of the dark earl worked upon her mind in spite of all. Why had the Queen forbidden her to meet Michel, or write to him, or to receive letters from him? Why had the Queen, who had spoken such gratitude, deserted her. And now even the Duke's Daughter wrote to her no more, sent her no more messages. She felt herself a prisoner, and that the Queen had forgotten her debt.

She took to wandering to that part of the palace grounds where she could see the

windows of the tower her lover inhabited. Her old habit of cheerful talk deserted her, and she brooded. It was long before she heard of the duel between the seigneur and Lord Leicester — the Duke's Daughter had kept this from her, lest she should be unduly troubled—and when, in anxiety, she went to the house where Lemprière had been quartered, he had gone, none could tell her whither. Buonespoir was now in close confinement, by secret orders of Leicester, and not allowed to walk abroad; and thus, with no friend save her father, now so much under the influence of the earl, she was bitterly solitary. Bravely she fought the growing care and suspicion in her heart; but she was being tried beyond her strength. Her father had urged her to make personal appeal to the Queen; and at times, despite her better judgment, she was on the verge of doing so. Yet what could she say? She could not go to the Queen of England and cry out, like a silly milkmaid, "You have taken my lover—give him back to me!" What proof had she that the Queen wanted her lover? And if

she spoke, the impertinence of the suggestion might send back to the fierce Medici that same lover, to lose his head.

Leicester, who now was playing the game as though it were a hazard for states and kingdoms, read the increasing trouble in her face; and waited confidently for the moment when in desperation she would lose her self-control and go to the Queen.

But he did not reckon with the depth of the girl's nature and her true sense of life. Her brain told her that what she was tempted to do she should not; that her only way was to wait; to trust that the Queen of England was as much true woman as queen, and as much queen as true woman; and that the one was held in high equipoise by the other. Besides, Trinity Day would bring the end of it all, and that was not far off. She steeled her will to wait till then, no matter how dark the sky might be.

As time went on, Leicester became impatient. He had not been able to induce M. Aubert to compel Angèle to accept a quiet refuge at Kenilworth; he saw that this plan

would not work, and he deployed his mind upon another. If he could but get Angèle to seek De la Forêt in his apartment in the palace, and then bring the matter to Elizabeth's knowledge, with sure proof, De la Forêt's doom would be sealed. At great expense, however; for, in order to make the scheme effective, Angèle should visit De la Forêt at night. This would mean the ruin of the girl as well. Still that could be set right; because, once De la Forêt was sent to the Medici, the girl's character could be cleared; and, if not, so much the surer would she come at last to his protection. What he had professed in cold deliberation had become in some sense a fact. She had roused in him an eager passion. He might even dare, when De la Forêt was gone, to confess his own action in the matter to the Queen, once she was again within his influence. She had forgiven him more than that in the past, when he had made his own mad devotion to herself excuse for his rashness or misconduct.

He waited opportunity, he arranged all

details carefully, he secured the passive agents of his purpose; and when the right day came he acted.

About ten o'clock one night, a half-hour before the closing of the palace gates, when no one could go in or go out save by permit of the Lord Chamberlain, a footman from a surgeon of the palace came to Angèle, bearing a note which read:

"*Your friend is very ill, and asks for you. Come hither alone; and now, if you would come at all.*"

Her father was confined to bed with some ailment of the hour, and asleep—it were no good to awaken him. Her mind was at once made up. There was no time to ask permission of the Queen. She knew the surgeon's messengers by sight; this one was in the usual livery, and his master's name was duly signed. In haste she made herself ready, and went forth into the night with the messenger, her heart beating hard, a pitiful anxiety shaking her. Her steps were

fleet between the lodge and the palace. They were challenged nowhere, and the surgeon's servant, entering a side-door of the palace, led her hastily through gloomy halls and passages, where they met no one, though once in a dark corridor some one brushed against her. She wondered why there were no servants to show the way, why the footman carried no torch nor candle; but haste and urgency seemed due excuse, and she thought only of Michel, and that she would soon see him—dying, dead perhaps before she could touch his hand! At last they emerged into a lighter and larger hall-way, where her guide suddenly paused, and said to Angèle, motioning towards a door:

"Enter. He is there."

For a moment she stood still, scarce able to breathe, her heart hurt her so. It seemed to her as if life itself was arrested. As the servant, without further words, turned and left her, she knocked, opened the door without awaiting a reply, and, stepping into semi-darkness, said, softly:

"Michel! Michel!"

XVII

AT Angèle's entrance a form slowly raised itself on a couch, and a voice, not Michel's, said: "Mademoiselle—by our Lady, 'tis she!"

It was the voice of the Seigneur of Rozel, and Angèle started back, amazed.

"You, monsieur—you!" she gasped. "It was you that sent for me?"

"Send? Not I—I have not lost my manners yet. Rozel at court is no greater fool than Lemprière in Jersey."

Angèle wrung her hands. "I thought it De la Forêt who was ill. The surgeon said to come quickly."

Lemprière braced himself against the wall, for he was weak and his fever still high. "Ill?—not he! As sound in body and soul

as any man in England. That is a friend, that De la Forêt lover of yours, or I'm no butler to the Queen. He gets leave and brings me here, and coaxes me back to life again—with not a wink of sleep for him these five days past till now."

Angèle had drawn nearer, and now stood beside the couch, trembling and fearful, for it came to her mind that she had been made the victim of some foul device. The letter had read: "*Your friend is ill.*" True, the seigneur was her friend, but he had not sent for her.

"Where is De la Forêt?" she asked, quickly.

"Yonder, asleep," said the seigneur, pointing to a curtain which divided the room from one adjoining.

Angèle ran quickly towards the door, then stopped short. No, she would not waken him. She would go back at once. She would leave the palace by the way she came. Without a word she turned and went towards the door opening into the hallway. With her hand upon the latch she stopped short

again, for she realized that she did not know her way through the passages and corridors, and that she must make herself known to the servants of the palace to obtain guidance and exit. As she stood helpless and confused, the seigneur called, hoarsely, "De la Forêt! De la Forêt!"

Before Angèle could decide upon her course the curtain of the other room was thrust aside and De la Forêt entered. He was scarce awake, and he yawned contentedly. He did not see Angèle, but turned towards Lemprière. For once the seigneur had a burst of inspiration. He saw that Angèle was in the shadow, and that De la Forêt had not observed her. He determined that the lovers should meet alone.

"Your arm, De la Forêt," he grunted. "I'll get me to the bed in yonder room—'tis easier than this couch."

"Two hours ago you could not bear the bed, and must get you to the couch—and now! Seigneur, do you know the weight you are?" he added, laughing, as he stooped, and, helping Lemprière gently to his feet,

raised him slowly in his arms and went heavily with him to the bedroom. Angèle watched him with a strange thrill of timid admiration and delight. Surely it could not be that Michel—her Michel—could be bought from his allegiance by any influence on earth. There was the same old simple laugh on his lips as, with chaffing words, he carried the huge seigneur to the other room. Her heart acquitted him then and there of all blame, past or to come.

"Michel!" she said aloud, involuntarily—the call of her spirit which spoke on her lips against her will.

De la Forêt had helped Lemprière to the bed again as he heard his name called, and he stood suddenly still, looking straight before him into space. Angèle's voice seemed ghostly and unreal.

"Michel!" he heard again, and he came forward into the room where she was. Yet once again she said the word scarcely above a whisper, for the look of rapt wonder and apprehension in his manner overcame her. Now he turned towards her, where she stood

in the shadow by the door. He saw her, but even yet he did not stir, for she seemed to him still an apparition.

With a little cry she came forward to him. "Michel—help me!" she murmured, and stretched out her hands.

With a cry of joy he took her in his arms, and pressed her to his heart. Then a realization of danger came to him.

"Why did you come?" he asked.

She told him hastily. He heard with astonishment, and then said: "There is some foul trick here. Have you the message?" She handed it to him. "It is the surgeon's writing, verily," he said; "but it is still a trick, for the sick man here is Rozel. I see it all. You and I forbidden to meet—it was a trick to bring you here!"

"Oh, let me go!" she cried. "Michel, Michel, take me hence!" She turned towards the door.

"The gates are closed," he said, as a cannon boomed on the evening air.

Angèle trembled violently. "Oh, what will come of this?" she cried, in tearful despair.

"Be patient, sweet, and let me think," he answered.

At that moment there came a knocking at the door, then it was thrown open, and there stepped inside the Earl of Leicester, preceded by a page bearing a torch.

"Is Michel de la Forêt within?" he called; then stopped short, as though astonished, seeing Angèle.

"So! so!" he said, with a contemptuous laugh.

Michel de la Forêt's fingers twitched. He quickly stepped in front of Angèle, and answered: "What is your business here, my lord?"

Leicester languorously took off a glove, and seemed to stifle a yawn in it; then said: "I came to take you into my service, to urge upon you for your own sake to join my troops, going upon duty in the North; for I fear that if you stay here the Queen Mother of France will have her way. But I fear I am too late. A man who has sworn himself into service d'amour has no time for service de la guerre."

"I will gladly give an hour from any service I may follow to teach the Earl of Leicester that he is less a swordsman than a trickster."

Leicester flushed, but answered coolly: "I can understand your chagrin. You should have locked your door. It is the safer custom." He bowed slightly towards Angèle. "You have not learned our English habits of discretion, Monsieur de la Forêt. I would only do you service. I appreciate your choler. I should be no less indignant. So, in the circumstances, I will see that the gates are opened—of course you did not realize the flight of time—and I will take mademoiselle to her lodgings. You may rely on my discretion. I am wholly at your service—tout à vous, as who should say in your charming language."

The insolence was so veiled in perfect outward courtesy that it must have seemed impossible for De la Forêt to reply in terms equal to the moment. He had, however, no need to reply, for the door of the room suddenly opened, and two pages stepped inside

with torches. They were followed by a gentleman in scarlet and gold, who said, "The Queen!" and stepped aside.

An instant afterwards Elizabeth, with the Duke's Daughter, entered.

The three dropped upon their knees, and Elizabeth waved without the pages and the gentleman-in-waiting.

When the doors closed, the Queen eyed the three kneeling figures, and as her glance fell on Leicester a strange glitter came into her eyes. She motioned all to rise, and, with a hand upon the arm of the Duke's Daughter, said to Leicester:

"What brings the Earl of Leicester here?"

"I came to urge upon monsieur the wisdom of holding to the Sword, and leaving the Book to the butter-fingered religious. Your Majesty needs good soldiers."

He bowed, but not low, and it was clear he was bent upon a struggle. He was confounded by the Queen's presence—he could not guess why she should have come; and that she was prepared for what she saw was clear.

"And brought an eloquent pleader with you?" She made a scornful gesture towards Angèle.

"Nay, your Majesty; the lady's zeal outran my own, and crossed the threshold first."

The Queen's face wore a look that Leicester had never seen on it before, and he had observed it in many moods.

"You found the lady here, then?"

"With monsieur, alone. Seeing she was placed unfortunately, I offered to escort her hence to her father. But your Majesty came upon the moment."

There was a ring of triumph in Leicester's voice. No doubt, by some chance, the Queen had become aware of Angèle's presence, he thought. Fate had forestalled the letter he had already written on this matter, and meant to send her within the hour. Chance had played into his hands with perfect suavity. The Queen, less woman now than queen, enraged by the information got he knew not how, had come at once to punish the gross breach of her orders and a dark misconduct —so he thought.

The Queen's look, as she turned it on Angèle, apparently had in it what must have struck terror to even a braver soul than that of the helpless Huguenot girl.

"And it is thus you spend the hours of night? God's faith, but you are young to be so wanton!" she cried, in a sharp voice. "Get you from my sight, and out of my kingdom as fast as horse and ship may carry you, as feet may bear you." Leicester's face lighted to hear.

"Your high Majesty," pleaded the girl, dropping on her knees, "I am innocent. As God lives, I am innocent."

"The man, then, only is guilty?" the Queen rejoined, with scorn. "Is it innocent to be here at night, my palace gates shut, with your lover—alone?" Leicester laughed at the words.

"Your Majesty, oh, your gracious Majesty, hear me. We were not alone—not alone—"

There was a rustle of curtains, a heavy footstep, and Lemprière of Rozel staggered into the room. De la Forêt ran to help him,

and, throwing an arm around him, almost carried him towards the couch. Lemprière, however, slipped from De la Forêt's grasp to his knees on the floor before the Queen.

"Not alone, your high and sacred Majesty—I am here—I have been here through all. I was here when mademoiselle came, brought hither by trick of some knave not fit to be your immortal Majesty's subject. I speak the truth, for I am butler to your Majesty, and no liar. I am Lemprière of Rozel."

No man's self-control could meet such a surprise without wavering. Leicester was confounded, for he had not known that Lemprière was housed with De la Forêt. For a moment he could do naught but gaze at Lemprière. Then, as the seigneur suddenly swayed, and would have fallen, the instinct of effective courtesy, strong in him, sent him with arms outstretched to lift him up. Together, without a word, he and De la Forêt carried him to the couch and laid him down.

That single act saved Leicester's life. There was something so naturally (though, in truth, it was so hypocritically) kind in

the way he sprang to his enemy's assistance that an old spirit of fondness stirred in the Queen's breast, and she looked strangely at him. When, however, they had disposed of Lemprière, and Leicester had turned again towards her, she said:

"Did you think I had no loyal and true gentlemen at my court, my lord? Did you think my leech would not serve me as fair as he would serve the Earl of Leicester? Ye have not bought us all, Robert Dudley, who have bought and sold so long. The good leech did your bidding and sent your note to the lady; but there your bad play ended and Fate's began. A rabbit's brains, Leicester—and a rabbit's end. Fate has the brains you need."

Leicester's anger burst forth now under the lash of ridicule. "I cannot hope to win when your Majesty plays Fate in caricature."

With a little gasp of rage Elizabeth leaned over and slapped his face with her long glove. "Death of my life! but I who made you do unmake you," she cried.

He dropped his hand on his sword. "If you were but a man—and not—" he said, then stopped short, for there was that in the Queen's face which changed his purpose.

Anger was shaking her, but there were tears in her eyes. The woman in her was stronger than the queen. It was nothing to her at this moment that she might have his life as easily as she had struck his face with her glove; this man had once shown the better part of himself to her, and the memory of it shamed her for his own sake now. She made a step towards the door, then turned and spoke:

"My lord, I have no palace and no ground wherein your footstep will not be trespass. Pray you, remember."

She turned towards Lemprière, who lay on his couch faint and panting. "For you, my Lord of Rozel, I wish you better health, though you have lost it somewhat in a good cause."

Her glance fell on De la Forêt. Her look softened. "I will hear you preach next Sunday, sir."

There was an instant's pause, and then she said to Angèle, with gracious look and in a low voice: "You have heard from me that calumny which the innocent never escape. To try you, I neglected you these many days; to see your nature even more truly than I knew it, I accused you but now. You might have been challenged first by one who could do you more harm than Elizabeth of England, whose office is to do good, not evil. Nets are spread for those whose hearts are simple, and your feet have been caught. Be thankful that we understand; and know that Elizabeth is your loving friend. You have had trials — I have kept you in suspense — there has been trouble for us all; but we are better now; our minds are more content; so all may be well, please God! You will rest this night with our lady-dove here, and to-morrow early you shall return in peace to your father. You have a good friend in our cousin." She made a gentle motion towards the Duke's Daughter. "She has proved it so. In my leech she has a slave. To her you owe this help in time of

need. She hath wisdom, too, and we must listen to her, even as I have done this day."

She inclined her head towards the door. Leicester opened it, and as she passed out she gave him one look which told him that his game was lost, if not forever, yet for time uncertain and remote. "You must not blame the leech, my lord," she said, suddenly turning back. "The Queen of England has first claim on the duty of her subjects. They serve me for love; you they help at need as time-servers."

She stepped on, then paused again and looked back. "And I forbid fighting betwixt you," she said, in a loud voice, looking at De la Forêt and Leicester.

Without further sign or look, she moved on. Close behind came Angèle and the Duke's Daughter, and Leicester followed at some distance.

XVIII

NOT far from the palace, in a secluded place hidden by laburnum, roses, box, and rhododendrons, there was a quaint and beautiful retreat. High up on all sides of a circle of green the flowering trees and shrubs interlaced their branches, and the grass, as smooth as velvet, was of such a note as soothed the eye and quieted the senses. In one segment of the verdant circle was a sort of open bower made of poles, up which roses climbed and hung across in gay festoons; and in two other segments mossy banks made resting-places. Here, in days gone by, when Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, first drew the eyes of his Queen upon him, Elizabeth came to listen to his vows of allegiance which swam in floods of

passionate devotion to her person. Christopher Hatton, Sir Henry Lee, the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Sussex, a race of gallants, had knelt upon this pleasant sward. Here they had declared a devotion that, historically platonic, had a personal passion which, if rewarded by no personal requital, must have been an expensive outlay of patience and emotion.

But those days had gone. Robert Dudley had advanced far past his fellows, had locked himself into the chamber of the Queen's confidence, had for long proved himself necessary to her, had mingled deference and admiration with an air of monopoly, and had then advanced to an air of possession, of suggested control. Then had begun his decline. England and England's Queen could have but one ruler, and upon an occasion in the past Elizabeth made it clear by the words she used: "God's death, my lord! I have wished you well; but my favor is not so locked up for you that others shall not partake thereof; and, if you think to rule here, I will take a course to see you forth-

coming. I will have here but one mistress and no master."

In these words she but declared what was the practice of her life, the persistent passion of her rule. The world could have but one sun, and every man or woman who sought its warmth must be a sun-worshipper. There could be no divided faith, no luminaries in the sky save those which lived by borrowed radiance.

Here in this bright theatre of green and roses, poets had sung the praises of this Queen to her unblushing and approving face; here ladies thrice as beautiful as she had begged her to tell them the secret of her beauty, so much greater than that of any living woman; and she was pleased even when she knew they flattered but to gain her smile—it was the tribute that power exacts. The place was a cenotaph of past romance and pleasure. Every leaf of every tree and flower had impressions of glories, of love, ambition, and intrigue, of tears and laughter, of joyousness and ruin. Never a spot in England where so much had been said and done, so far-

reaching in effect and influence. But its glory was departed, its day was done, it was a place of dreams and memories: the Queen came here no more. Many years had withered since she had entered this charmed spot; and that it remained so fine was but evidence of the care of those to whom she had given strict orders seven years past that in and out of season it must be ever kept as it had erstwhile been. She had never entered the place since the day the young Marquis of Wessex, whom she had imprisoned for marrying secretly and without her consent, on his release came here, and, with a concentrated bitterness and hate, had told her such truths as she never had heard from man or woman since she was born. He had impeached her in such cold and murderous terms as must have made wince even a woman with no pride. To Elizabeth it was gall and wormwood. When he at last demanded the life of the young wife who had died in enforced seclusion, because she had married the man she loved, Elizabeth was so confounded that she hastily left the place, say-

ing no word in response. This attack had been so violent, so deadly, that she had seemed unnerved, and forbore to command him to the Tower or to death.

"You, in whose breast love never stirred, deny the right to others whom God blessed with it," he cried. "Envious of mortal happiness that dare exist outside your will or gift, you sunder and destroy. You, in whose hands was power to give joy, gave death. What you have sown you shall reap. Here, on this spot, I charge you with high treason, with treachery to the people over whom you have power as a trust, which trust you have made a scourge."

With such words as these he had assailed her, and for the first time in her life she had been confounded. In safety he had left the place and taken his way to Italy, from which he had never returned, though she had sent for him in kindness. Since that day Elizabeth had never come hither; and by-and-by none of her court came save the Duke's Daughter, and her fool, who both made it their resort. Here the fool came upon the

Friday before Trinity Day, bringing with him Lemprière and Buonespoir, to whom he had much attached himself.

It was a day of light and warmth, and the place was like a basket of roses. Having seen the two serving-men dispose, in a convenient place, the refreshment which Lemprière's appetite compelled, the fool took command of the occasion, and made the two sit upon a bank, while he prepared the repast.

It was a notable trio; the dwarfish fool, with his shaggy, black head, twisted mouth, and watchful, wandering eye, whose foolishness was but the flaunting cover of shrewd observation and trenchant vision. Going where he would, and saying what he listed, now in the Queen's inner chamber, then in the midst of the council, unconsidered, and the butt of all, he paid for his bed and bounty by shooting shafts of foolery, which as often made his listeners shrink as caused their laughter. The Queen he called Delicio, and Leicester, Obligato—as one who piped to another's dance. He had taken to Buones-

poir at the first glance, and had frequented him, and Lemprière had presently been added to his favor. He had again and again been messenger between them, as also of late between Angèle and Michel, whose case he viewed from a stand-point of great cheerfulness, and treated as children playing on the sands—as, indeed, he did the Queen and all near to her. But Buonespoir, the pirate, was to him reality and the actual, and he called him Bono Publico. At first Lemprière, ever jealous of his importance, was inclined to treat him with elephantine condescension; but he could not long hold out against the boon archness of the jester, and had collapsed suddenly into as close a friendship as that between himself and Buonespoir.

A rollicking spirit was his own fullest stock-in-trade, and it won him like a brother.

So it was that here, in the very bosom of the forest, lured by the pipe the fool played, Lemprière burst forth into song, in one hand a bottle of canary, in the other a handful of comfits:

"Duke William was a Norman
(*Spread the sail to the breeze!*)
That did to England ride;
At Hastings by the Channel
(*Drink the wine to the lees!*)
Our Harold the Saxon died.
If there be no cakes from Normandy,
There'll be more ale in England!"

"Well sung, nobility, and well said," cried Buonespoir, with a rose by the stem in his mouth, one hand beating time to the music, the other clutching a flagon of muscadella; "for the Normans are kings in England, and there's drink in plenty at the court of our Lady Duchess."

"Delicio shall never want while I have a penny of hers to spend," quoth the fool, feeling for another tune.

"Should conspirators prevail, and the damnedest be, she hath yet the Manor of Rozel and my larder," urged Lemprière, with a splutter through the canary.

"That shall be only when the fifth wind comes—it is so ordained, Nuncio!" said the fool, blinking.

Buonespoir set down his flagon. "And

what wind is the fifth wind?" he asked, scratching his bullet-head, his childlike, wide-spread eyes smiling the question.

"There be now four winds—the north wind, and his sisters, the east, the west, and south. When God sends a fifth wind, then conspirators shall wear crowns. Till then Delicio shall sow and I shall reap, as is Heaven's will."

Lemprière lay back and roared with laughter. "Before Belial, there never was such another as thou, fool. Conspirators shall die and not prevail, for a man may not marry his sister, and the north wind shall have no progeny. So there shall be no fifth wind."

"Proved, proved!" cried the fool. "The north wind shall go whistle for a mate—there shall be no fifth wind. So Delicio shall still sail by the compass, and shall still compass all, and yet be compassed by none; for it is written, Who compasseth Delicio existeth not."

Buonespoir watched a lark soaring, as though its flight might lead him through the

fool's argument clearly. Lemprière closed his eye and struggled with it, his lips outpursed, his head sunk on his breast. Suddenly his eyes opened; he brought the bottle of canary down with a thud on the turf. "'Fore Michael and all angels, I have it, fool; I travel, I conceive. De Carteret of St. Ouen's must have gone to the block ere conceiving so. I must conceive thus of the argument. He who compasseth the Queen existeth not, for, compassing, he dieth."

"So it is by the hour-glass and the fortune told in the porringer. You have conceived like a man, Nuncio."

"And conspirators, I conceive, must die, so long as there be honest men to slay them," rejoined the seigneur.

"Must only honest men slay conspirators? Oh, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!" wheezed Buonespoir, with a grin. He placed his hand upon his head in self-pity. "Buonespoir, art thou damned by muscadella?" he murmured.

"But thou art purged of the past, Bono Publico," answered the fool. "Since Deli-

cio hath looked upon thee she hath shredded the Tyburn lien upon thee—thou art flushed like a mountain spring; and conspirators shall fall down by thee if thou, passant, dost fall by conspirators in the way. Bono Publico, thou shalt live by good company. Henceforth contraband shall be spurned and the book of grace opened."

Buonespoir's eyes laughed like a summer sky, but he scratched his head and turned over the rose-stem in his mouth reflectively. "So be it, then, if it must be; but yesterday the Devon sea-sweeper, Francis Drake, overhauled me in my cottage, coming from the Queen, who had infused him of me. 'I have heard of you from a high mast-head,' said he. 'If the Spanish main allure you, come with me. There be galleons yonder still; they shall cough up doubloons.' 'It hath a sound of piracy,' said I. 'I am expurgated. My name is written on clean paper now, blessed be the name of the Queen!' 'Tut, tut, Buonesperado,' laughed he, 'you shall forget that Tyburn is not a fable if you care to have doubloons reminted at the Queen's mint.

It is meet Spanish Philip's head be molted to oblivion, and Elizabeth's raised, so that good silver be purged of Popish alloy.' But that I had sworn by the little finger of St. Peter, when the moon was full, never to leave the English seas, I also would have gone with Drake of Devon this day. It is a man and a master of men, that Drake of Devon."

"'Tis said that when a man hath naught left but life, and hath treated his honor like a poor relation, he goes to the Spanish main with Drake and Grenville," said Lemprière.

"Then must Obligato go, for he hath such credentials," said the fool, blowing thistle-down in the air. "Yesterday was no Palm Sunday to Leicester. Delicio's head was high. 'Imperial Majesty,' quoth Obligato, his knees upon the rushes, 'take my life, but send me not forth into darkness where I shall see my Queen no more. By the light of my Queen's eyes have I walked, and pains of hell are my Queen's displeasure.' 'Methinks thy humbleness is tardy,' quoth Delicio. 'No cock shall crow by my nest,' said she. 'And, by the mantle of Elijah, I am

out with sour faces and men of phlegm and rheum. I will be gay once more. So get thee gone to Kenilworth, and stray not from it on thy peril. Take thy malaise with thee, and I shall laugh again.' And he goeth. So that was the end of Obligato, and now cometh another tune."

"She hath good cheer?" asked Lemprière, eagerly.

"I have never seen Delicio smile these seven years as she smiled to-day; and when she kissed Amicitia I sent for my confessor and made my will. Delicio hath come to spring-time, and the voice of the turtle is in her ear."

"Amicitia—and who is Amicitia?" asked Lemprière, well flushed with wine.

"She who hath brought Obligato to the diminuendo and finale," answered the fool; "even she who hath befriended the Huguenottine of the black eyes."

"Ah, she, the Duke's Daughter—ah, that is a flower of a lady! Did she not say that my jerkin fitted featly when I did act as butler to her adorable Majesty three months

syne? She hath no mate in the world save Mademoiselle Aubert, whom I brought hither to honor and to fame."

"To honor and fame, was it—but by the hill of desperandum, Nuncio," said the fool, prodding him with his stick of bells.

"'Desperandum!' I know not Latin, it amazes me," said Lemprière, waving a lofty hand.

"She—the Huguenottine—was a-mazed, also, and from the maze was played by Obligato."

"How so! how so!" cried the seigneur, catching at his meaning. "Did Leicester waylay and siege? 'Sblood, had I known this I'd have broached him and swallowed him even on crutches!"

"She made him raise the siege, she turned his own guns upon him, and in the end hath driven him hence."

By rough questioning Lemprière got from the fool, by snatches, the story of the meeting in the maze, which had left Leicester standing with the jester's ribboned bells in his hand. Then the seigneur got to his

feet and hugged the fool, bubbling with laughter.

"By all the blood of all the saints, I will give thee burial in my own grave when all's done," he spluttered; "for there never was such fooling, never such a wise fool come since Confucius and the Khan. Good be with you, fool, and thanks be for such a lady. Thanks be also for the Duke's Daughter. Ah, how she laid Leicester out! She washed him up the shore like behemoth, and left him gaping."

Buonespoir intervened. "And what shall come of it? What shall be the end? The *Honeyflower* lies at anchor—there be three good men in waiting, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and—"

The seigneur interrupted. "There's little longer waiting. All's well! Her high, hereditary Majesty smiled on me, when she gave Leicester congé and fiery quittance. She hath me in favor, and all shall be well with Michel and Angèle. O fool, fool, fantastic and flavored fool, sing me a song of good content, for if this business ends not

with crescendo and bell-ringing, I am no butler to the Queen nor keep good company!"

Seating themselves upon the mossy bank, their backs to the westward sun, the fool peered into the green shadows and sang with a soft melancholy an ancient song that another fool had sung to the first Tudor:

"When blows the wind and drives the sleet,
And all the trees droop down;
When all the world is sad, 'tis meet
Good company be known:
And in my heart good company
Sits by the fire and sings to me.

"When warriors return, and one
That went returns no more;
When dusty is the road we run,
And garners have no store;
One ingle-nook right warm shall be
Where my heart hath good company.

When man shall flee and woman fail,
And folly mock and hope deceive,
Let cowards beat the breast and wail,
I'll homeward hie; I will not grieve:
I'll draw the blind, I'll there set fre
My heart's beloved boon company.

"When kings shall favor, ladies call
My service to their side;
When roses grow upon the wall
Of life, with love inside;
I'll get me home with joy to be
In my heart's own good company!"

"Oh, fool, oh, beneficent fool, well done! 'Tis a song for a man—'twould shame De Carteret of St. Ouen's to his knees," cried Lemprière.

"Oh, benignant fool, well done!—'twould draw me from my meals," said a voice behind the three, and turning hastily about they saw, smiling and applausive, the Duke's Daughter. Beside her was Angèle.

The three got to their feet, and each made obeisance after his kind—Buonespoir ducking awkwardly, his blue eyes bulging with pleasure, Lemprière swelling with vanity and spreading wide acknowledgment of their presence, the fool condescending a wave of welcome.

"Oh, abundant Amicitia!" cried the fool to the Duke's Daughter, "thou art saved by so doing. So get thee to thanksgiving and God's mercy."

"Wherefore am I saved by being drawn from my meals by thy music, fool?" she asked, linking her arm in Angèle's.

"Because thou art more enamoured of lampreys than of man; and it is written that thou shalt love thy fellow-man, and he that loveth not is lost; therefore, thou art lost if thou lingerest at meals."

"Is it so, then? And this lady—what thinkest thou? Must she also abstain and seek good company?"

"No, verily, Amicitia, for she is good company itself, and so she may sleep in the larder and have no fear."

"And what think you—shall she be happy? Shall she have gifts of fate?"

"Discriminately so, Amicitia. She shall have souvenirs and no suspicions of fate. But she shall not linger here, for all lingerers in Delicio's court are spied upon—not for their souls' good. She shall go hence, and—"

"Ay, princely lady, she shall go hence," interposed Lemprière, who had panted to speak and could bear silence no longer. "Her high Majesty will kiss her on the brow,

and in Jersey Isle she shall blossom and bloom and know bounty—or never more shall I have privilege and perquage."

He lumbered forward and kissed Angèle's hand as though conferring distinction, but with great generosity. "I said that all should go well, and so it shall. Rozel shall prevail. The Queen knows on what rock to build, as I made warrant for her, and will still do so."

His vanity was incorrigible, but through it ran so childlike a spirit that it bred friendship and repulsed not. The Duke's Daughter pressed the arm of Angèle, who replied:

"Indeed, it has been so according to your word, and we are—I am—shall ever be beholden. In storm you have been with us, so true a pilot and so brave a sailor; and if we come to port and the quiet shore, there shall be spread a feast of remembrance which shall never grow cold, seigneur."

"One ingle-nook right warm shall be
Where my heart hath good company,"

sang the fool, and catching by the arm

Buonespoir, who ducked his head in farewell, ran him into the greenwood. Angèle came forward as if to stay Buonespoir, but stopped short reflectively. As she did so the Duke's Daughter whispered quickly into Lemprière's ear.

Swelling with pride he nodded, and said, "I will reach him and discover myself to him, and bring him, if he stray, most undoubted and infallible lady," and with an air of mystery he made a heavily respectful exit.

Left alone, the two ladies seated themselves in the bower of roses and for a moment were silent. Presently the Duke's Daughter laughed aloud.

"In what seas of dear conceit swims your leviathan seigneur, heart's-ease?"

Angèle stole a hand into the cool palm of the other.

"He was builded for some lonely sea all his own. Creation cheated him. But God give me ever such friends as he, and I shall, indeed, 'have good company' and fear no issue." She sighed.

"Remains there still a fear? Did you not have good promise in the Queen's words *that night?*"

"Ay, so it seemed, and so it seemed before—on May Day, and yet—"

"And yet she banished you, and tried you, and kept you heart-sick? Sweet, know you not how bitter a thing it is to owe a debt of love to one whom we have injured? So it was with her. The Queen is not a saint, but very woman. Marriage she hath ever contemned and hated; men she hath desired to keep her faithful and impassioned servitors. So does power blind us. And the braver the man, the more she would have him in her service, at her feet, the centre of the world."

"I had served her in a crisis, an hour of peril. Was naught due me?"

The Duke's Daughter drew her close. "She never meant but that all should be well. And because you had fastened on her feelings as never I have seen another of your sex, so for the moment she resented it; and because De la Forêt was yours—ah, if you had each been naught to the other, how easy

it would have run! Do you not understand?"

"Nay, then, and yea, then—and I put it from me. See, am I not happy now? Upon your friendship I build."

"Sweet, I did what I could. Leicester filled her ears with poison every day, mixed up your business with great affairs with France, sought to convey that you both were not what you are, until at last I countermarched him." She laughed merrily. "Ay, I can laugh now, but it was all hanging by a thread, when my leech sent his letter that brought you to the palace. It had grieved me that I might not seek you or write to you in all those sad days; but the only way to save you was by keeping the Queen's command; for she had known of Leicester's visits to you, of your meeting in the maze, and she was set upon it that alone, all alone, you should be tried to the last vestige of your strength. If you had failed—"

"If I had failed—" Angèle closed her eyes and shuddered. "I had not cared for myself, but Michel—"

"If you had *failed* there had been no need to grieve for Michel. He had not grieved for thee. But see, the wind blows fair, and in my heart I have no fear of the end. You shall go hence in peace. This morning the Queen was happier than I have seen her these many years: a light was in her eye brighter than showeth to the court. She talked of this place, recalled the hours spent here, spoke even softly of Leicester. And that gives me warrant for the future. She has relief in his banishment, and only recalls older and happier days when, if her cares were no greater, they were borne by the buoyancy of girlhood and youth. Of days spent here she talked until mine own eyes went blind. She said it was a place for lovers, and if she knew any two lovers who were true lovers, and had been long parted, she would send them here."

"There be two true lovers, and they have been long parted," murmured Angèle.

"But she commanded these lovers not to meet till Trinity Day, and she brooks not disobedience even in herself. How could

she disobey her own commands? But"—her eyes were on the greenwood and the path that led into the circle—"but she would shut her eyes to-day and let the world move on without her, let lovers thrive and birds be nesting without heed or hap. Disobedience shall thrive when the Queen connives at it—and so I leave you to your disobedience, sweet."

With a laugh she sprang to her feet and ran. Amazed and bewildered, Angèle gazed after her. As she stood looking she heard her name called softly.

Turning, she saw Michel. They were alone.

XIX

HEN De la Forêt and Angèle saw the Queen again it was in the royal chapel.

Perhaps the longest five minutes of M. de la Forêt's life were those in which he waited the coming of the Queen on that Trinity Sunday which was to decide his fate. When he saw Elizabeth enter the chapel his eyes swam, till the sight of them was lost in the blur of color made by the motions of gorgeously apparelled courtiers and the people of the household. When the Queen had taken her seat and all was quiet, he struggled with himself to put on such a front of simple boldness as he would wear upon day of battle. The sword the Queen had given him was at his side, and his garb was still that of a gentleman, not of a Huguenot min-

ister such as Elizabeth in her grim humor, and to satisfy her bond with France, would make of him this day.

The brown of his face had paled in the weeks spent in the palace and in waiting for this hour; anxiety had toned the ruddy vigor of his bearing; but his figure was the figure of a soldier and his hand that of a strong man. He shook a little as he bowed to her Majesty, but that passed, and when at last his eye met that of the Duke's Daughter he grew steady; for she gave him, as plainly as though her tongue spoke, a message from Angèle. Angèle herself he did not see—she was kneeling in an obscure corner, her father's hand in hers, all the passion of her life pouring out in prayer.

De la Forêt drew himself up with an iron will. No nobler figure of a man ever essayed to preach the Word, and so Elizabeth thought; and she repented of the bitter humor which had set this trial as his chance of life in England and his freedom from the hand of Catherine. The man bulked larger in her eyes than he had ever done, and she strug-

gled with herself to keep the vow she had made to the Duke's Daughter the night that Angèle had been found in De la Forêt's rooms. He had been the immediate cause, fated or accidental, of the destined breach between Leicester and herself; he had played a significant part in her own life. Glancing at her courtiers, she saw none that might compare with him, the form and being of calm boldness and courage. She sighed she knew scarce why.

When De la Forêt first opened his mouth and essayed to call the worshippers to prayer no words came forth—only a dry whisper. Some ladies simpered, and more than one courtier laughed silently. Michel saw, and his face flamed up. But he laid a hand on himself, and a moment afterwards his voice came forth, clear, musical, and resonant, speaking simple words, direct and unlacquered sentences, passionately earnest withal. He stilled the people to a unison of sentiment, none the less interested and absorbed because it was known that he had been the cause of the great breach between the Queen

and the favorite. Ere he had spoken far, flippant gallants had ceased to flutter handkerchiefs, to idly move their swords upon the floor.

He took for his text, "*Stand and search for the old paths.*" The beginning of all systems of religion, the coming of the Nazarene, the rise and growth of Christianity, the martyrdoms of the early Church, the invasion of the truth by false doctrine, the abuses of the Church, the Reformation, the martyrdom of the Huguenots for the return to the early principles of Christianity, the "search for the old paths," he set forth in a tone generous but not fiery, presently powerful and searching, yet not declamatory. At the last he raised the sword that hung by his side and the book that lay before him, and said:

"And what matter which it is we wield—this steel that strikes for God or this book which speaks of Him? For the book is the sword of the Spirit, and the sword is the life of humanity; for all faith must be fought for and all that is has been won by strife. But the paths wherein ye go to battle must be

the old paths; your sword shall be your staff by day and the book your lantern by night. That which ye love ye shall teach, and that which ye teach ye shall defend; and if your love be a true love your teaching shall be a great teaching and your sword a strong sword which none may withstand. It shall be the pride of sovereign and of people; and so neither 'height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God.'"

Ere he had ended some of the ladies were overcome, the eyes of the Duke's Daughter were full of tears, and Elizabeth said, audibly, when he ceased speaking: "On my soul, I have no bishop with a tongue like his. Would that my lord of Ely were here to learn how truth should be spoke. Henceforth my bishops shall first be Camisards."

Of that hour's joyful business the Queen wrote thus to the Medici before the day was done:

"Cancelling all other letters on the matter, this M. de la Forêt shall stay in my kingdom. I may not be the headsman of one of

my faith—as eloquent a preacher as he was a brave soldier. Abiding by the strict terms of our treaty with my brother of France, he shall stay with us in peace and in our own care. He hath not the eloquence of a Knox, but he hath the true thing in him, and that speaks."

To the Duke's Daughter the Queen said, "On my soul, he shall be married instantly, or my ladies will carry him off and murder him for love."

And so it was that the heart of Elizabeth the Queen warmed again, and dearly, towards two Huguenot exiles, and showed that in doing justice she also had not so sour a heart towards her sex as was set down to her credit. Yet she made one further effort to keep De la Forêt in her service. When Michel, once again, declined, dwelt earnestly on his duty towards the widow of his dead chief, and begged leave to share her exile in Jersey, Elizabeth said, "On my soul, but I did not think there was any man on earth so careless of princes' honors!"

To this De la Forêt replied that he had given

his heart and life to one cause, and since Montgomery had lost all, even life, the least Michel de la Forêt could do was to see that the woman who loved him be not unprotected in the world. Also, since he might not at this present fight for the cause, he could speak for it; and he thanked the Queen of England for having shown him his duty. All that he desired was to be quiet for a space somewhere in "her high Majesty's good realm" till his way was clear to him.

"You would return to Jersey, then, with our friend of Rozel?" Elizabeth said, with a gesture towards Lemprière, who, now recovered from his wound, was present at the audience.

De la Forêt inclined his head. "If it be your high Majesty's pleasure."

And Lemprière of Rozel said, "He would return with myself your noble Majesty's friend before all the world, and Buonespoir his ship the *Honeyflower*."

Elizabeth's lips parted in a smile, for she was warmed with the luxury of doing good, and she answered:

"I know not what the end of this will be, whether our loyal Lemprière will become a pirate or Buonespoir a butler to my court; but it is too pretty a hazard to forego in a world of chance. By the rood, but I have never, since I sat on my father's throne, seen black so white as I have done this past three months. You shall have your Buonespoir, good Rozel; but if he plays pirate any more —tell him this from his Queen—upon an English ship, I will have his head, if I must needs send Drake of Devon to overhaul him."

That same hour the Queen sent for Angèle, and by no leave, save her own, arranged the wedding-day, and ordained that it should take place at Southampton, whither the Comtesse de Montgomery had come on her way to Greenwich to plead for the life of Michel de la Forêt and to beg Elizabeth to save her poverty, both of which things Elizabeth did, as the annals of her life record.

After Elizabeth—ever self-willed—had declared her way about the marriage ceremony, looking for no reply save that of silent obe-

dience, she made Angèle sit at her feet and tell her whole story again from first to last. They were alone, and Elizabeth showed to this young refugee more of her own heart than any other woman had ever seen. Not by words alone, for she made no long story; but once she stooped and kissed Angèle upon the cheek, and once her eyes filled up with tears, and they dropped upon her lap unheeded. All the devotion shown herself as a woman had come to naught; and it may be that this thought stirred in her now. She remembered how Leicester and herself had parted, and how she was denied all those soft resources of regret which were the right of the meanest women in her realm. For, whatever she might say to her Parliament and people, she knew that all was too late—that she would never marry, and must go childless and uncomforted to her grave. Years upon years of delusion of her people, of sacrifice to policy, had at last become a self-delusion, to which her eyes were not full opened yet—she sought to shut them tight. But these refugees, coming at the moment of

her own struggle, had changed her heart from an ever-growing bitterness to human sympathy. When Angèle had ended her tale once more the Queen said:

"God knows ye shall not linger in my court. Such lives have no place here. Get you back to my Isle of Jersey, where ye may live in peace. Here all is noise, self-seeking, and time-service. If ye twain are not happy I will say the world should never have been made."

Before they lett Greenwich Palace—M. Aubert and Angèle, De la Forêt, Lemprière, and Buonespoir—the Queen made Michel de la Forêt the gift of a chaplaincy to the crown. To Monsieur Aubert she gave a small pension, and in Angèle's hands she placed a deed of dower worthy of a generosity greater than her own.

At Southampton Michel and Angèle were married by royal license, and with the Comtesse de Montgomery set sail in Buonespoir's boat, the *Honeyflower*, which brought them safe to St. Helier's, in the Isle of Jersey.

XX

FOLLOWED several happy years for Michel and Angèle. The protection of the Queen herself, the chaplaincy she had given De la Forêt, the friendship with the governor of the island, and the boisterous tales Lemprière had told of those days at Greenwich Palace quickened the sympathy and held the interest of the people at large, while the simple lives of the two won their way into the hearts of all, even, at last, to that of De Carteret of St. Ouen's. It was Angèle herself who brought the two seigneurs together at her own good table; and it needed all her tact on that occasion to prevent the ancient foes from drinking all the wine in her cellar.

There was no parish in Jersey that did not

know their goodness, but mostly in the parishes of St. Martin's and Rozel were their faithful labors done. From all parts of the island people came to hear Michel speak, though that was but seldom; and when he spoke he always wore the sword the Queen had given him and used the Book he had studied in her palace. It was to their home that Buonespoir the pirate—faithful to his promise to the Queen that he would harry English ships no more—came wounded, after an engagement with a French boat sent to capture him, carried thither by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It was there he died, after having drunk a bottle of St. Ouen's muscadella, brought secretly to him by his unchanging friend Lemprière, so hastening the end.

The Comtesse de Montgomery, who lived in a cottage near by, came constantly to the little house on the hill-side by Rozel Bay. She had never loved her own children more than she did the brown-haired child with the deep-blue eyes which was the one pledge of the great happiness of Michel and Angèle.

Soon after this child was born M. Aubert had been put to rest in St. Martin's churchyard, and there his tombstone might be seen so late as a hundred years ago. So things went softly by for seven years, and then Madame de Montgomery journeyed to England, on invitation of the Queen and to better fortune, and Angèle and De la Forêt were left to their quiet life in Jersey. Sometimes this quiet was broken by bitter news from France of fresh persecution and fresh struggle on the part of the Huguenots. Thereafter for hours, sometimes for days, De la Forêt would be lost in sorrowful and restless meditation; and then he fretted against his peaceful calling and his uneventful life. But the gracious hand of his wife and the eyes of his child led him back to cheerful ways again.

Suddenly one day came the fearful news from England that the plague had broken out and that thousands were dying. The flight from London was like the flight of the children of Israel into the desert. The dead-carts, filled with decaying bodies, rattled

through the foul streets, to drop their horrid burdens into the great pit at Aldgate; the bells of London tolled all day and all night for the passing of human souls. Hundreds of homes, isolated because of a victim of the plague found therein, became ghastly breeding-places of the disease, and then silent, disgusting graves. If a man shivered in fear or staggered from weakness, or for very hunger turned sick, he was marked as a victim, and despite his protests was huddled away with the real victims to die the awful death. From every church, where clergy were left to pray, went up the cry for salvation from "plague, pestilence, and famine." Scores of ships from Holland and from France lay in the Channel, not allowed to touch the shores of England nor permitted to return whence they came. On the very day that news of this reached Jersey came a messenger from the Queen of England for Michel de la Forêt to hasten to her court, for that she had need of him, and need which would bring him honor. Even as the young officer who brought the letter handed it to De la Forêt

in the little house on the hill-side above Rozel Bay, he was taken suddenly ill and fell at the Camisard's feet.

De la Forêt straightway raised him in his arms. He called to his wife, but, bidding her not come near, he bore the doomed man away to the lonely Ecréhos rocks lying within sight of their own doorway. Suffering no one to accompany him, he carried the sick man to the boat which had brought the Queen's messenger to Rozel Bay. The sailors of the vessel fled, and alone De la Forêt set sail for the Ecréhos.

There, upon the black rocks, the young man died, and Michel buried him in the shore-bed of the Maître Île. Then, after two days—for he could bear suspense no longer—he set sail for Jersey. Upon that journey there is no need to dwell. Any that hath ever loved a woman and a child must understand. A deep fear held him all the way, and when he stepped on shore at Rozel Bay he was as one who had come from the grave, haggard and old.

Hurrying up the hill-side to his doorway,

he called aloud to his wife, to his child. Throwing open the door, he burst in. His dead child lay upon a couch, and near by, sitting in a chair, with the sweat of the dying on her brow, was Angèle. As he dropped on his knee beside her, she smiled and raised her hand as if to touch him, but the hand dropped and the head fell forward on his breast. She was gone into a greater peace.

Once more Michel made a journey—alone—to the Ecréhos, and there, under the ruins of the old Abbey of Val Richer, he buried the twain he had loved. Not once in all the terrible hours had he shed a tear; not once had his hand trembled; his face was like stone and his eyes burned with an unearthly light.

He did not pray beside the graves. But he knelt and kissed the earth again and again. He had doffed his robes of peace, and now wore the garb of a soldier, armed at all points fully. Rising from his knees, he turned his face towards Jersey.

"Only mine! Only mine!" he said, aloud, in a dry, bitter voice.

In the whole island, only his loved ones

had died of the plague. The holiness and charity and love of Michel and Angèle had ended so!

When once more he set forth upon the Channel, he turned his back on Jersey and shaped his course towards France, having sent Elizabeth his last excuses for declining a service which would have given him honor, fame, and regard. He was bent upon a higher duty.

Not long did he wait for the death he craved. Next year, in a Huguenot sortie from Anvers, he was slain.

He died with these words on his lips:

"Maintenant, Angèle!"

In due time the island people forgot them both, but the Seigneur of Rozel caused a stone to be set up on the highest point of land that faces France, and on the stone were carved the names of Michel and Angèle. Having done much hard service for his country and for England's Queen, Lemprière at length hung up his sword and gave his years to peace. From the Manor of Rozel he was

wont to repair constantly to the little white house, which remained as the two had left it—his own by order of the Queen—and there, as time went on, he spent most of his days. To the last he roared with laughter if ever the name of Buonespoir was mentioned in his presence; he swaggered ever before the royal court and De Carteret of St. Ouen's; and he spoke proudly of his friendship with the Duke's Daughter, who had admired the cut of his jerkin at the court of Elizabeth. But in the house where Angèle had lived he moved about as though in the presence of a beloved sleeper he would not awake.

Michel and Angèle had had their few years of exquisite life and love, and had gone; Lemprière had longer measure of life and little love, and who shall say which had more profit of breath and being? The generations have passed away, and the Angel of Equity hath a smiling pity as she scans the scales and the weighing of the past.

THE END

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Parker, (Sir) Gilbert
A ladder of swords

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